NORTH-WEST TASMANIA 1858-1910:  
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY

by

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March 1969
This thesis is my own work.

H.J.W. STOKES
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I should like to thank for all their help my supervisors, Mr L.F. Fitzhardinge and Dr F.B. Smith, my typists, Mrs Gallina, Mrs Isarangkun and Mrs Richardson, and the many people of North-West Tasmania who gave me advice and information.
SUMMARY

Concerned with the economic decline of the colony, the Tasmanian parliament in 1858 approved legislation intended to settle small farmers in the often fertile but heavily-timbered western half of the island. The new act at first attracted many settlers to the forest lands, most of whom had at least some previous experience of farming, if little capital. But within a decade they were threatened with ruin because of a disastrous fall in Australian crop prices, the effects of which were aggravated by the reluctance of a series of weak ministries to build roads in the new settlements: that most of the pioneers were able to keep their farms was a tribute to their determination and the fertility of the soil.

In the 1880s Australian population and overseas markets began to outstrip food production and crop prices at last rose, encouraging another influx of settlers to the forest lands which continued, checked by the depression of the early 1890s, into the first decade of the new century. The farmer's position was further strengthened by the introduction of industrial dairying, which reduced his dependence on the uncertain produce market, and by 1910 the North-West was a well-established, quite prosperous community of small freeholders.
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INTRODUCTION

The attempt to settle an 'industrious yeomanry' of small farmers by legislation permitting the free selection of crown land was one of the more important developments in eastern Australia during the second half of the nineteenth century. But the process and consequences of free selection have been studied so far principally in areas which were, by soil, vegetation and climate, suited at least as well to grazing as to cultivation and the history of the small farmer has been, in consequence, one of unceasing struggle against drought, squatters, creditors and isolation, often ending in complete failure. Free selection, however, was not confined to the western slopes of the Dividing Range and the great plains which lay beyond. In Tasmania, Gippsland and the south-western district of Victoria, and much of the coastlands of New South Wales there were very large areas well-suited in soil and climate to arable farming, but which, because of the cost of clearing the dense forest which covered them, were of little attraction to the pastoralist. This thesis is concerned with North-West Tasmania, the main area of forest land settlement in the island colony during the second half of the nineteenth century. Its purpose is not to contest the findings of those who have looked at free selection in the drier parts of the continent, but to study the establishment of a small-farming community where, if anywhere in Australia it should have been successful, and to draw attention
to a part of the history of free selection hitherto neglected.

I had several reasons for choosing North-West Tasmania\(^1\) as a subject. The predominance of holdings of 320 acres or less was an advantage, for small farmers are an elusive people and in regions in which cultivation was combined with grazing they tended to be a rather nebulous group merging on one hand with the larger landowners and on the other with the wage labourers. It was, too, a well-defined, compact area small enough to allow me to cover a period of 50 years, which was desirable in a community in which change occurred so slowly, yet sufficiently large to offer a rewarding amount of material. The papers of the Van Diemen's Land Company and the Thomas farm journals, in particular, provide a fruitful source of information on the farming operations and general economic position of a class which seldom left record of its affairs, although the results of a fairly thorough search of the district for other private papers were disappointing. Official records, notably the reports of the various royal commissions and select committees on land alienation and settlement, of the Surveyor-General and his district surveyors and of such government agencies as the Council

\(^1\) The geographical limits of this study are, on the east the infertile, sparsely-settled hills between the Mersey and Tamar rivers, on the west similar country inland from Rocky Cape and on the south the end of settlement at the edge of the Central Highlands. Where relevant, however, I have referred to similar but smaller areas of forest settlement in the Circular Head and Duck river districts of the Far North-West.
of Agriculture are voluminous, while the decennial valuation rolls afford an opportunity, possibly unique in Australia, of tracing the fortunes of individual settlers. The several local newspapers are invaluable, not only for the very large amount of material on agriculture, politics and society which they contain, but also because they place information from other, more specialised, sources in better perspective.

This thesis is not intended to be a complete regional history, but rather an investigation of those aspects of the community which seem to give it its essential character and especially those which are relevant to rural Australia as a whole during the period. In consequence, I have divided the study into three parts, the first examining the economics of small farmer settlement, the second the place of the yeoman in local, colonial and national politics and the third the development of community institutions in a rural society.
ABBREVIATIONS

Newspapers
ADV. Advocate (Burnie)
C.C. Cornwall Chronicle (Launceston)
D.H. Devon Herald (Latrobe)
E.B.T. Emu Bay Times (Burnie)
H.T.C. Hobart Town Courier
H.T.G. Hobart Town Gazette
L.E. Examiner (Launceston)
N.W.P. North-West Post (Devonport)
T.M. Tasmanian Mail (Hobart)
W.T. Wellington Times (Burnie)

Parliamentary papers
H.A.J. Journals of the Tasmanian House of Assembly
L.C.J. Journals of the Tasmanian Legislative Council.

Private papers
V.D.L.P., O.D. Papers of the Van Diemen's Land Company
(Outgoing dispatches from the Colonial Chief Agent to the Court of Directors in London).
CHAPTER 1.

THE MAKING OF THE WASTE LANDS ACT OF 1858

When the new Tasmanian government received control of the disposal of waste lands in 1856 the economy of the island was in a critical state. If there was to be a recovery from the depression caused by the mass emigration to the Victorian goldfields and the withdrawal of Imperial financial support it had to be made by developing the colony's staple industries of wool-growing and arable farming. Yet in 1856 the first of these was held in check because the only land still unalienated was too expensive to clear in relation to the low returns for sheep-farming, and the second was threatened with ruin because it was too inefficient to compete with the produce of the new farms being brought into cultivation on the Mainland. The pastoralists had long ago occupied all the lightly-timbered country in and surrounding the valleys of the Derwent and Tamar rivers and their tributaries, but they had realised the impossibility of economically clearing the dense rain-forest which covered the lower parts of the western half of the island. The Van Diemen's Land Company's attempt to graze sheep in the high parkland country which bordered the Central Highlands proved a disastrous failure and from the mid-1830s there had been a steady emigration of land-seekers, particularly to Port Phillip. Little could be done to increase the island's flocks significantly.

Arable farming had an important place in the Van Diemen's Land economy, for there was land well-suited in
soil and climate to wheat-growing close to the sea and the island had become the principal granary of eastern Australia, generally having more land in cultivation than any other colony until the late 1850s:

**Total acreage in cultivation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Tasmania</th>
<th>Victoria</th>
<th>New South Wales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1841</td>
<td>132,614</td>
<td>4,881</td>
<td>110,242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1851</td>
<td>151,846</td>
<td>52,176</td>
<td>153,117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1859</td>
<td>208,619</td>
<td>298,959</td>
<td>247,542</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Acreage in cultivation per 1,000 people**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Tasmania</th>
<th>Victoria</th>
<th>New South Wales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1841</td>
<td>2,641</td>
<td>367</td>
<td>821</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1851</td>
<td>2,185</td>
<td>601</td>
<td>776</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1859</td>
<td>2,426</td>
<td>579</td>
<td>733</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

But farming techniques were primitive. The Launceston *Examiner* noted in 1860:

> Except in a few cases, the mode of conducting farm operations is most primitive and unsettled. The plan which involves the smallest expenditure of trouble and expense is preferred. The simplest and often most inadequate appliances are employed. This system has recommended itself to our farmers partly by reason of the high rates of labour, and partly by reason of the high price often obtained for grain...the colonial system of farming is slovenly in the extreme.\(^2\)

The proper care of the soil was discouraged by the prevalence of short-term non-improving leases, which

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2. ibid., 11 February 1860.
faced the tenant with the prospect of an increase in rent or eviction every few years; he thus had little choice but to over-crop the land and spend a minimum on manuring or other improvements. In the Westbury district, to the west of the Tamar valley, the land was in 1858 held predominantly by tenants in small lots:

**Tenure of lots by acreage classes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acreage Class</th>
<th>Resided</th>
<th>Tenant</th>
<th>Resided</th>
<th>Owner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-50 ac.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51-150 ac.</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>151-320 ac.</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>321-640 ac.</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>640+ ac.</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As long as the other colonies would buy all the grain Tasmania could produce, no matter how inefficiently, agriculture in the island was profitable; as the *Examiner* pointed out in 1860:

> hitherto we have not known what competition is. We have had pretty well our own way and our own price; our neighbors have been absolutely dependent upon us for bread-stuffs and horse-feed. The prices we have had for our produce have usually been remunerative; often excessive.  

But the vast post gold-rush increase in cultivation in the Mainland colonies, which began in the later 1850s, put an end to high prices. By 1860 it had become clear,

1. ibid.
Indeed to the observant it must have been so for several years before, that:

Circumstances have changed. In the matter of the supply of horse-feed we have got all the world as our competitors, and we know how our oat market has suffered. It will yet be so with wheat; perhaps not this year... but looking at the future, who can doubt it?¹

That same year Tasmanian farmers complained that good Californian wheat was being landed in Melbourne at a price they were unable to beat.²

The Tasmanian landowners' response to falling crop prices was not to cultivate their exhausted fields more efficiently, but to turn them over to sheep or abandon them to wattles and thistles,³ and it seemed possible that the island would become the sole domain of a small colony of pastoralists unless new land could be opened up and new settlers attracted. Fortunately the forest lands in the North-West and the North-East were capable of such development for, if expensive to clear, they contained much excellent soil and were reasonably accessible to sea transport. But previous attempts to settle them had had little success. In the early 1840s a small number of farmers had established themselves along the north-west coast, mostly as tenants to the Van Diemen's Land Company, which was trying to save something from the capital invested in its abortive pastoral venture. They found that the land grew

¹ ibid.
² ibid.
³ ibid., 25 March 1862.
excellent crops of potatoes, but that it was rather too
damp for wheat, and as potatoes were almost worthless in
that decade of depression it was hard for even the most
determined to keep their farms.¹

In November 1851 Lieutenant-Governor Denison
attempted to check 'the emigration of so many of the
Colonial youths' by introducing a radical new land
scheme. Any person had the right to select from 100 to
640 acres, to be leased for ten years at a nominal
rental and then purchased at £1 per acre. It was in
addition permissible to take a lease, for grazing only,
of an area equal to ten times that of the land to be
purchased.²

If Denison's real object was, as his enemies avowed,
to lavish land on men of wealth and influence who might
be persuaded to support the continuation of transporation,
then it succeeded admirably. There was an immediate
rush both for the remaining unoccupied pastoral lands in
the Midlands and on the eastern flanks of the Central
Highlands and for the best of the forest lands, but
whereas the former country was fit only for grazing, the
latter was good land suitable for intensive cultivation
and its wholesale and uncontrolled alienation was an
enormous blunder. In the North-West, the principal area
of forest land selection, nearly 90,000 acres were taken

¹ James Fenton, Bush Life in Tasmania (second ed.,
Devenport, 1964) pp.57-9; H.J.W. Stokes, The Van
Diemen's Land Company 1824-1860, B.A. thesis (unpub.),
University of Tasmania, 1964.

² H.T.G., 4 November 1851, pp.935-6.
up in 500 and 640 acre blocks in a strip extending almost unbroken along the coast from Port Sorell to Table Cape and in places for 12 miles inland. The purchasers were not, however, intending settlers, but large landholders, merchants, and speculators from Hobart, Launceston and the old Midland districts, who were quick to take advantage of the generous disposal of such potentially valuable land. Several purchasers of blocks near the coast subdivided their land into lots of from 20 to 100 acres for tenant farmers and it was by this means that almost all of the small number of agricultural settlers who came to the North-West between 1851 and 1858 were introduced.\footnote{1} In 1858 only 6,797 acres were in crop between Port Sorell and Cape Grim.\footnote{2} The Denison regulations were worse then useless, for they not only failed to encourage new settlement, but also deferred the proper occupation of a vast area of good land for at least ten years.

At the establishment of responsible government, therefore, the occupied lands were much less than fully utilised; of some 2,800,000 acres privately owned, 1,100,000 held on annual lease and 650,000 held under the 1851 regulations, only about one acre in 22 was in cultivation and the remainder carried less than one sheep

\footnote{1}{1858 assessment roll, H.T.G., 4 May 1858, pp. 579-83, 18 May 1858, pp. 705-15.}
\footnote{2}{H.A.J., vol. 4, 1859, Paper 1, p. 56.}
to every two acres.\textsuperscript{1} But failing compulsory resumption, a measure most unlikely to be sanctioned by the parliament of 1856, nothing could be done to enforce the more profitable use of land already privately owned or tied up under the 1851 regulations. The debate on the land question in Tasmania was concerned solely with the virgin forest country still unalienated and with the land held by the pastoralists on annual grazing licence; in consequence it lacked much of the bitterness of similar debates in Victoria and New South Wales because the old-established settlers were unassailable, holding the best of their land by grant or purchase, although they showed little inclination to give up the leasehold fringes of their estates to small farmers.

The first ministry under responsible government, led by William Champ, was an uneasy alliance of men who

\begin{itemize}
\item This estimate was made from the following figures:
\begin{align*}
\text{Land privately owned before 1858} & \quad 2,879,448 \\
\text{Land held under the 1851 regulations} & \quad 655,000 \\
\text{Other land held under lease on 1 December 1857} & \quad 1,143,157 \\
\end{align*}
\end{itemize}


Total acreage in cultivation in 1857: 206,119\textsuperscript{3}

Sheep population in 1857: 1,912,423

had formerly been at odds over the transportation question, but who were now united in a loose 'conservative' faction by dislike of Thomas Gregson's 'liberals'. In mid-December 1856 Champ's Secretary for Lands, Henry Anstey, himself one of the pastoral gentry, published the draft of a new bill, which provided for the sale of all crown land by tender at a price of not less than £1 per acre; land offered for tender, but not disposed of, might be sold privately at any time during the following 12 months, the price being graduated from 30/- per acre for lots of from 50 to 100 acres to 20/- per acre for lots of more than 500 acres. The scheme was received with little enthusiasm by the press. The Hobart Town Courier, usually friendly to the ministry, believed that it had placed the government 'in considerable peril':

We have got a public estate or domain to improve. The fate of the country largely depends upon its improvement. A free, numerous hard-working rural population alone can improve it. The advent of such a population can alone be invited by cheap land - fixed price - no credit - previous survey - coloured charts in local offices - printed conveyances - no red tape - no mystery or delay. If people are wanted for Tasmania, this is the only course by which they can be had....One man may harangue about tender, another may cry out that the highest bidder should be the purchaser, a third may extol the credit system. But if the lands are to be got under tillage by a fixed yeomanry, 'the country's pride', we must reject any sneaking tendency to aristocratic monopolies, all sinister.

H.T.C., 16 December 1856.
favouring of the rich man's encroachments. The country must be reserved for the laborious poor man....A Bill of virtual monopoly, exclusion, favouritism, - any Bill which does not honestly throw open the best remaining lands, will fail... it will ruin any Ministry.¹

The Anstey bill was referred to a select committee of the House of Assembly on January 7 1857,² but within six weeks the ministry had lost a motion of confidence on its budget proposals and resigned. The new ministry was led by Thomas Gregson, socially one of the gentry, but in politics a 'liberal' and the hero of the Hobart mob. Gregson had denounced the Anstey bill as 'monstrous',³ but his own land scheme, which proposed the auction of 160,000 acres presently held on pastoral lease, seemed designed more to solve the immediate financial problems of the government than to promote the ultimate good of the colony. Gregson predicted that the land would sell at an average price of £2 per acre,⁴ but with so much of it poor, remote rough grazing country (a fact that few people at that time appeared to recognize), it seems most unlikely that it would have fetched anything approaching that figure. It was an irresponsible scheme and many people must have sympathised with Francis Smith, formerly Attorney-General

¹ ibid., 2 January 1857.
³ H.T.C., 8 January 1857.
⁴ ibid., 30 March 1857.
in the Champ ministry, when he suggested that the government might also sell Mt. Wellington 'at half-a-crown a load'. Once again, however, the ministry fell before it could put its land proposals into effect.

The next ministry, a 'conservative' one, led for its first month by William Weston and then by Francis Smith, took office on 25 April 1857. The following day the report of the select committee on the Anstey bill was placed before the Assembly, its most important recommendations being:

(a) Land should be sold by auction rather than tender.

(b) The lowest auction upset price should be 10/- per acre.

(c) Land should also be sold privately at £1 per acre.

(d) No one should be allowed to purchase more than one lot (of a maximum area of 640 acres) on credit.

(e) Land in the remote western part of the colony should be designated Unsettled and sold on more favourable terms than other land.

(f) Land revenue should be devoted entirely to works of permanent improvement, such as immigration and road construction.\(^1\)

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1 C.C., 1 April 1857.
2 H.T.C., 27 May 1857.
On 26 May Smith introduced to the Assembly a new waste land bill, in which the influence of the select committee's report was obvious. The principal clauses were:

**Six:** There were to be three classes of waste land:

(a) Town and suburban  
(b) Country  
(c) Unsettled, being that part of the colony bordered on the south and west by the sea, on the north by the Arthur river and on the east by a line drawn southwards through Barn Bluff, the valleys of the Cuvier, Florentine and Picton rivers, and Adamson's Peak to the coast.

**Nine:** Country and Unsettled lands could be sold by auction at a minimum upset price of 10/- per acre.

**Eleven:** The same could also be sold privately at £1 per acre in lots of not less than 50 acres.

**Thirteen:** Purchasers under section eleven could buy on credit, provided that a credit premium of one fifth was added to the sale price, the terms being a deposit equal to one fifth of the new sale price and the balance in equal annual instalments of not less than one tenth.

**Twenty:** Lots of from 50 to 640 acres of Unsettled land would be granted free to applicants who:

(a) Had capital (including stock and implements) equal to £1 for every acre applied for and satisfied the Commissioner for Lands that they intended to settle on and cultivate their grant.
(b) Declared that they had taken neither for themselves nor for some other person a similar grant.

The grant would be issued only if the grantee:

(a) Resided on the land for five years from the date of the contract.

(b) During that time cleared and cultivated at least five acres for every 50 of the grant.¹

Smith's bill had passed only its first reading in the Assembly when the session ended on 5 June, but it provided a framework for public discussion of the land question during the recess. The Examiner hailed the bill as 'large-hearted, liberal in spirit, and true to the best interests of Tasmania',² but a correspondent of the paper signing himself 'Waterloo-Point' argued that it was quite the reverse:

You expect great results from the gratuitous grants in fee of the third class [Unsettled] lands....The whole is a delusion, a humbug, and a snare, and from your own views...you can know nothing of the miserable region where the third class lands are situated.³

It was true that the Unsettled lands were quite unfit for cultivation, but it seems likely that the government's decision to limit free grants to that part of the island was not as hypocritical as 'Waterloo-Point' supposed. Little was then known of the interior of the

¹ L.E., 30 July 1857.
² ibid.
³ ibid., 13 August 1857.
western half of the island, but many Tasmanians were convinced that it must contain a very large area of good land and Smith may well have believed that his scheme would encourage a considerable extension of settlement. But it was essentially a conservative bill, giving away only land that was virtually unsaleable and having as its first object the disposal of as much land as profitably as possible, regardless of what the purchaser intended to do with it.

Whatever the failings of the Smith bill there was little extra-parliamentary agitation for a more liberal measure. The Courier wrote in June 1857:

We cannot say we are sanguine of any useful measure being framed. It is scarcely to be expected that the landholders in Parliament will act contrary to what appears to them their collective and individual interests. A pressure from without is the only hopeful course, and the 'public' is wretchedly apathetic upon a subject which, most of all, affects their welfare.¹

The influence of those who did speak out was diminished by their failure to agree among themselves. Most advocates of small-farmer settlement wanted land suitable for tillage to be sold at a fixed price with stringent conditions of residence and improvement, but there were many differences of opinion over details. Some favoured the sale of land very cheaply to bona fide settlers as an investment in the colony's future, while others argued that a price of £1 per acre was necessary to keep up the revenue and finance immigration and road

¹ H.T.C., 12 June 1857.
construction. Credit also had its supporters and opponents, the former arguing that it helped the small man and the latter, recalling the vast area taken up on credit under the 1851 regulations by people who had no intention of cultivating, that it was an encouragement to speculators and that in any case a man unable to pay for his land in cash was unlikely to make a successful farmer. Some wanted land offered on particularly favourable terms to immigrants, while others believed young men born in the colony were entitled to preference.

The general confusion of ideas on the land question was apparent in the proceedings of the land committees set up in the colony's two cities. At the request of some of his townspeople the mayor of Launceston held a land meeting in the Temperance Hall at noon on Tuesday 25 August, but the attendance was poor and it was decided to adjourn to some time more convenient to the working classes.1 The meeting was resumed with greater success the following Friday evening, the Examiner reporting that the working classes were 'present in large numbers'. The principal speakers were Alderman Lewis Cohen (an auctioneer and deputy for Dr Cornelius Casey), James Matthews (a pawnbroker and politician of the Gregson faction), J.J. Moore (a poulterer), and the Revs. C. Price (Congregational) and H. Dowling (Baptist). Cohen began the proceedings with a motion of support for the Smith bill, as giving the small man a chance to buy land on liberal terms while not at the same time impeding the legitimate operation of capital, but Matthews countered

1 L.E., 27 August 1857.
with an amendment that all Country and Unsettled lands should be disposed of for 10/- per acre in lots of not less than 50 and not more than 640 acres. There followed much discussion:

in which, as indeed throughout the meeting, all sorts of suggestions were offered and every person appeared to entertain on every point a diametrically opposite opinion to every one else.

Every one who spoke mentioned his desire to settle the small man on the land, but there was much disagreement as to how this could best be done, in particular between those who wanted very low prices or free grants and those who saw a 'reasonable' price as essential to government revenue. Eventually the mayor and the proposers and seconders of the various motions put during the evening were elected a committee to draw up a report and the meeting once more adjourned.¹

On 18 September the report was presented to another meeting, not quite as well attended as the last. It provided for Country lands to be sold by private contract only at 10/- per acre in sections of from 50 to 640 acres, no person being allowed more than 640 acres. Eight years' credit was allowed on the same terms as in the Smith bill, but the purchaser was required to occupy the land and each year to bring into cultivation two acres for every 100 selected. The Unsettled lands were to be leased only, at 5/- per annum for every 100 acres. The report was adopted without discussion and there were

¹ L.E., 29 August 1857.
no further public gatherings on the land question in Launceston.¹

The people of Hobart were hardly more active. On 17 August 'a few working men of the city' formed the Tasmanian Waste Lands Committee, of which William Boys (a Gregsonite member of the Assembly) was chairman and Zephaniah William Davis secretary, and set about drawing up a land scheme. The committee 'invited communications from those citizens desirous of co-operating with them', but were distressed to find that they received only one letter. Their scheme, which was presented to a poorly-attended meeting on 18 September, was more radical than that devised in Launceston, for it required the best of the Country and Unsettled lands to be sold in lots of from 20 to 100 acres (no person to purchase more than one) at 5/- per acre on interest-free credit, payment being made in five equal biennial instalments; at least two acres were to be cleared and cultivated each year. The remaining Country and Unsettled lands could be sold in 640-acre sections (once again no person being allowed more than one) at £1 per acre, credit purchasers paying a deposit of 5/- per acre and the remainder in five equal annual instalments.² The report was embodied in a petition which was signed by 657 people, predominantly Hobart artisans and labourers, and laid before the House of Assembly on 27 October.³

¹ ibid., 19 September 1857.
²  H.T.C., 18 September 1857.
Despite the Courier's suggestion that 'every city and village throughout the island' should hold a public meeting to denounce the 'sham bill now printed', there were only five land meetings outside the two cities. At Bothwell, in the upper Derwent district, 144 people, most of them farmers, labourers, shepherds and artisans, although there were among them a school teacher and a Church of Scotland minister, signed a petition to parliament calling for:

(a) The resumption of all land held under the 1851 regulations, for which the purchaser had not complied with the requirements.

(b) The sale of all crown lands, including the above, in lots of from 20 to 100 acres (no person to hold more than 100 acres) at £1 per acre. Payment would be by a deposit of 5/- per acre and instalments of 1/6 per acre per annum for the next ten years. The purchaser must occupy his lot, clear and fence at least three acres annually and erect one cottage of not less than four rooms. Every settler was to have the right of leasing 100 acres of crown land for every ten that he purchased.  

At Forth, in the North-West, a meeting on 30 September decided unanimously that:

(a) 100 acre lots of Country land should be available for selection at 5/- per acre, payable over six years, the purchaser being required to live on the land and clear two acres annually.

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1 H.T.C., 3 July 1857.
(b) The remaining Country lands should be sold at £1 per acre, payable over five years.

(c) Any man of 18 years or over should be entitled to a free grant of 50 acres of Country land, provided that he lived on it for eight years, clearing two acres annually.

(d) The Unsettled lands should be leased rather than sold.¹

It seems likely that there was more interest in the land question in the country districts than the few meetings actually held would suggest. From time to time there were plaintive letters to the press like one published by the Examiner in August 1857, which pointed out that:

There are hundreds of persons in this country...far worse off then the parrots and magpies. Parrots and magpies can build themselves a nest in any time they like; but a poor man can hardly get an inch of ground to rest his foot on.²

Another letter announced the determination of a group of young men to emigrate unless land in Tasmania was offered for selection at a fixed price.³ The many small tenant farmers who moved from the old-settled districts to crown forest land in the North-West when new legislation was eventually passed were further evidence of dissatisfaction with the existing state of land tenure. But the poorer country people were isolated, busy and

¹ H.T.C., 7 October 1857.
² L.E., 6 August 1857.
³ ibid., 16 July 1857.
often ill-educated and it must have been difficult for them to organise meetings and petitions without assistance, an assistance which was unlikely to be had from the pastoral gentry and which could therefore be found only where a minister of the church, a doctor, a school-teacher or a storekeeper sympathised with their cause.

Nevertheless it cannot be denied that by the time parliament re-assembled on 13 October 1857 the great majority of Tasmanians had failed to show any active interest in the land question. It was in consequence hardly surprising that Smith, now Premier and Attorney-General, should have re-introduced on 16 October what was substantially his bill of May. The scheme was now divided into separate Waste and Unsettled Land bills, the former dividing the 'settled' parts of the island into Agricultural and Pastoral areas, within which the terms of sale were to be:

(a) All land could be auctioned [the minimum upset price was to be decided by parliament], Agricultural lands in lots of not more than 160 acres and Pastoral in lots of unlimited size.

(b) Land offered at auction but not disposed of could, during the following 12 months, be sold privately at a price to be fixed by parliament.

(c) Any person could select and purchase at the fixed price one lot of not more than 160 acres, provided that the land had not been advertised for auction and had never been held under pastoral lease.

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1 L.E., 22 October 1857.
(d) Credit purchasers were to pay a cash deposit of one quarter of the sale price and the remainder within the next three years.

The Unsettled Lands bill provided for free grants on the same terms and within the same area as the bill of May.

The House of Assembly turned its attention to the new land scheme early in November. Smith, in moving the second reading of the Waste Lands bill on 3 November, referred to the great difference of opinion on the land question in the colony and emphasised that the government:

had paid attention to most, if not all, of the suggestions which had been offered; they had endeavoured to arrive at the opinions of the majority, and to frame a Bill to carry out what was admitted to be its great object, the bona fide settlement and cultivation of the lands by a class of industrious settlers, and as far as possible in small sections.

The bill passed the lower house almost unchanged, save for an amendment increasing the maximum area of lots selected at a fixed price from 160 to 320 acres; the Gregson 'liberals' disliked it, but they were in a minority and in any case divided amongst themselves over some of the most important clauses. Gregson himself wanted to 'fix the wool kings, and make them purchase the lands they rented at not less than £1 per acre to pay off all the debts of the country', thereafter giving

1 H.T.C., 4 November 1857.
2 L.E., 7 November 1857.
away the remaining land to industrious settlers.\(^1\) His second-in-command, Maxwell Miller, thought, however, that agricultural land should be sold at 5/- per acre and pastoral at £1, to stop the rich settlers buying up the whole country, while the 'liberal' leader's son, J.C. Gregson, favoured £1 for agricultural land and 5/- for pastoral; eventually the Attorney-General's suggestion of 10/- per acre was accepted.\(^2\) There was further disagreement over the question of limiting the right of selection to land which had never been held under pastoral lease, some 'liberals' believing such a restriction necessary to stop the lessees buying up the land at a fixed price, while others shared William Race Allison's objection that this would shut up three million acres.\(^3\) The credit clause also split the 'liberals', most of them voting to restrict credit to land taken up under the 320-acre selection clause, as a check to speculators, while Maxwell Miller voted with the government majority to extend it to all Agricultural and Pastoral lands.\(^4\)

The bill was read a third time in the Assembly on 25 November and sent to the Legislative Council where, thanks to the unity of the Gregsonites and the poor attendance of government members, it was substantially altered. The credit clause was struck out, although a

\(^1\) H.T.C., 6 November 1857.
\(^2\) ibid.
\(^3\) L.E., 7 November 1857.
later amendment allowed credit for Agricultural land, and the minimum upset price of land which had at some time been held under lease was raised to £1, that for virgin land remaining at 10/-.

In addition, the clause restricting selection to virgin land was altered to allow the selection of lands previously held on lease in the districts to the south and south-east of Hobart; this amendment, the work of an alliance of ministerial renegades and the Gregson party, was professedly intended to encourage the settlement of the southern forest lands and John Helder Wedge, one of the Gregsonite leaders in the Council, tried unsuccessfully to have the same privilege extended to the Mersey district in the North-West.

The amended bill was returned to the lower house on 15 December. The increased upset price for land previously leased was agreed to, but the Assembly refused to accept the Council's limitation on credit or the exclusion of the southern forest lands from the ban on the selection of land previously occupied. Accordingly, on the bill's re-appearance in the Council, the Gregson party secured a majority to defer its consideration for six months, although later in the same evening an amendment was carried to put it off only until the end of the Christmas recess.¹ This defeat moved the ministerial party in the Assembly to denounce with fury those in another place who put faction before country.

¹ The account of the progress of the bill in the Legislative Council was compiled from contemporary reports in C.C., L.E., and H.T.C. and the Votes and Proceedings and Weekly Reports of Divisions sections of L.C.J., vol.2.
Thomas Chapman, a future 'conservative' premier, delivered an impassioned speech, of which the Courier reported:

Mr Chapman (holding up the Waste Lands Bill) said that was the test, that was their 'Bill of Rights'. (Loud cheers)....He implored the House to stand up for the Bill, the whole of the Bill, and nothing but the Bill. (Loud cheering.) For of what worth would it be without the credit system? (Hear, Hear.)....He believed if a dissolution were to take place at this time, and an appeal were made to the country, it would be shown by 99 out of every 100 that this Bill received the assent of the whole colony. (Cheers)

There was some justification for the conservatives' anger, not only because of the probability (in view of the course of Tasmanian politics for the next 20 years) that the first object of the Gregson party was to upset the ministry, but also because it ill became 'liberals' like John Wedge, who had taken up land speculatively under the 1851 regulations, to pose as the defenders of the small man against the capitalist. Nevertheless, if we allow that the 'liberal' majority in the Council genuinely believed that credit favoured the speculator rather than the intending cultivator, then their amendments were an honest, if not very radical (there was no move to insert conditions of residence and improvement) attempt to improve a bill which had few safeguards against abuse.

The Council resumed its consideration of the bill on 28 January, after a Gregsonite motion that it be

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H.T.C., 18 December 1857.
read six months hence had been lost. It seems likely that the ministry had put some pressure on its nominal supporters in the upper house during the recess, for, while the five Gregsonites (Wedge, James Whyte, Thomas Lowes, Thomas Horne and P.T. Smith) continued to obstruct the passage of the bill wherever possible, the 'conservatives' attended in sufficient numbers and voted with sufficient unity to consistently defeat them. In consequence the Council abandoned all but one (that restricting timber-felling licences to land not held on lease) of those of its amendments which the Assembly had refused to accept and the Waste Lands Act received the royal assent on 25 February 1858. The Unsettled Lands bill became law the same day, after an uneventful progress through parliament, members having shown little inclination to fight either for or against a measure dealing with such apparently worthless land.

For the intending agricultural settler, therefore, the essential provisions of the new Tasmanian land regulations were:

In the 'settled' districts:

(a) Any person could purchase an unlimited number of lots of not more than 160 acres each at auction, the lowest upset price permissible being £1 per acre for land which had at some time been held under lease and 10/- per acre for that which had not.

(b) Any person could purchase for £1 per acre an unlimited number of lots which had been offered at auction, but not sold, during the preceding 12 months [section 18].
(c) Any person could select and purchase for £1 per acre one lot of not more than 320 acres, provided that the land was not at the time of selection advertised for sale by auction and that it had never been held on lease [section 19].

(d) All land could be purchased on credit, provided that a premium of one fifth was added to the sale price, the terms being a deposit of one fifth of the new price and the remainder in eight equal annual instalments.

In the 'unsettled' districts:

Any person was entitled to one free grant of from 50 to 640 acres, provided that he:

(i) Had capital (including stock and equipment) equal to £1 for every acre granted.

(ii) Resided on the land for five years from the date of contract and during that time cleared and cultivated at least five acres for every fifty granted.

The Unsettled Lands Act was a failure, for hardly a single farmer ventured into the area in which it operated. A Cornwall Chronicle editorial summed it up well:

What a bitter delusion... a man must make his way over hill and dale through impervious scrub, bottomless gullies, impenetrable forests, and then when he arrives at six hundred and forty acres that will suit him... he must prove to the satisfaction of the Commissioner, (what a field for tip), that he is worth SIX HUNDRED AND FORTY POUNDS!¹

Expectations of the Waste Lands Act were varied. Charles Meredith, one of the leading Gregsonite members

¹ C.C., 13 March 1858.
of the Assembly, called it 'A bill to give the poor man a glimpse of the promised land, with the perfect assurance that he will never put his foot on it', but the London Observer wrote:

The terms on which the land can be purchased are well suited to the means of the humbler classes who may be desirous of obtaining a small homestead for themselves....The members of the government are evidently determined that the provisions of the Waste Lands Act shall not remain a dead letter upon the statute book...and it now remains to be seen whether the people are really desirous of obtaining a small homestead or farm of their own or not. We shall look forward to the result... with some curiosity, as exemplifying to a considerable extent the practical working of one of the most liberal land schemes perhaps ever devised in the British colonies.\(^1\)

The Observer might have been more sparing in its praise had the editor realised how little of Tasmania was practically available to the would-be cultivator of limited means. Much of the island, including the whole of the Unsettled lands and a very considerable part of the so-called Settled areas, was either too poor or too remote for cultivation. In addition, the large areas held on pastoral lease, and hence purchasable only at auction, were unlikely to attract the humble yeoman, for, as the Surveyor-General pointed out in 1862:

There leased lands...can hardly be recommended to the immigrant; not that they do not contain large areas of soils that may be classed either as fair or superior, but

\(^1\) L.E., 17 December 1857.

\(^2\) Reprinted in L.E., 18 December 1858.
they are very generally in the hands of large landholders, often nearly as rich as Croesus, who are not a very desirable class of persons to have to encounter in an auction room; and who may be most safely reckoned on as opponents in the event of their leased lands being put up by any one. Moreover, the waste lands that they occupy are generally so mixed up and fenced in along with their own private properties, which usually adjoin, that it is often a matter of great difficulty for any one, except the district surveyors, to tell what is crown land and what is not; and even they have often much trouble to make out the lines of distinction on the ground.¹

This warning to the small man was supported by evidence given by Captain William Langdon, M.L.C., to the 1861 select committee on the operation of the Waste Lands Act. In his home district of Hamilton, on an upper tributary of the Derwent, he found that:

There is a great jealousy among the larger proprietors of having small proprietors amongst them....One of these wishing to buy land would stand no chance with us, for we would give a large price for the land to keep them out.²

Langdon believed that the pastoral gentry opposed the purchase of land by small farmers because they feared the establishment of a shiftless, sheep-stealing ex-convict peasantry in their midst, but they seemed, in fact, to look upon all yeoman farmers, good or bad, with equal distaste.

The free selectors had therefore to look for homesteads in the forest lands of the North-West, the North-East and the wetter parts of the Derwent and Huon valleys, and it is with the North-West, the largest of these areas, that this thesis is concerned.
CHAPTER 2

THE STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL: 1858-1880

The pattern of settlement in the North-West was dictated by soil and topography. From a very narrow coastal plain the land rose in an undulating plateau which in general attained a height of 1,000 feet above sea level about 15 miles, and 2,000 feet about 25 miles from the coast and which to the south gradually merged with the mountains of the Central Highlands. The surface of the plateau was deeply dissected by the valleys of rivers, notably the Mersey, Forth, Wilmot, Leven, Blythe, Emu, Cam and Inglis, which flowed in a generally north-easterly direction, from the highlands to the sea. The difficulty of crossing, or even travelling along, these deep, steep-sided gorges and the swift-flowing rivers they contained forced the main roads into the hinterland to follow the intervening plateaux. Thus settlement extended inland as a series of independent wedges, each separated by a major river valley and each focussed on its own coastal port.¹ The greater part of the North-West had a rich chocolate-brown soil developed on volcanic basalt, but there were also belts of poorer soils, to the west of the Leven river and between the lower reaches of the Forth and Mersey rivers for example, which were avoided by the selectors

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and left as islands of forest in the surrounding farmland.¹

The average annual rainfall increased from about 30 inches on the coast to 70 inches or more on the mountain margins of settlement.² This combined with the general fertility of the soil to support a dense forest cover on land lower than approximately 2,000 feet, above which height the forest gradually gave way to sub-alpine moorland. The eucalypt was the dominant species over most of the forest; the most common varieties being stringy-bark (Eucalyptus obliqua) and yellow gum (E. ovata), with white gum (E. viminalis) near the coast and swamp gum (E. Regnans) in damp, shaded valleys. Beneath the eucalypts, which frequently grew to 250 feet or more, was a dense under-storey of myrtle, blackwood, sassafras, musk and fern, with scattered stands of celery-top pine. In some of the colder, wetter areas, in particular towards the Arthur river, the myrtle became the dominant species. Everywhere the density of the forest was increased by the chaos of fallen, rotting trees. The only gaps in the forest were a number of small areas of scrub and grassland, notably the Kentish Plains and Gunn's Plains which may have been the result of frequent aboriginal hunting fires. Above 2,000 feet the forest, in the face of colder climate and poorer soils, gradually gave way to grassland, interspersed with areas of smaller trees.³

¹ ibid., Map 6.
² ibid., Map 2.
³ ibid., Map 7 and pp.30-5; also notes made from personal observation 1966-7.
The free selectors did not, however, settle in a complete wilderness. The tenant farmers and timber-getters who had been coming to the district since about 1840, had by 1858 established a narrow, discontinuous belt of coastal settlement containing between 3,000 and 4,000 people from Port Sorell westward to Circular Head, which provided the newcomers with trading posts. Roads were, however, almost non-existent and even movement along the coast by the beaches was hampered by the lack of bridges over the treacherous mouths of the larger rivers. Farming and timber-getting were the main occupations of the settlers and on the Mersey and Don rivers four sawmills with attendant wharves and tramways and a small, struggling coal industry were the legacy of an influx of capital during the financial boom of the Victorian gold rushes.¹

Behind the coastal fringe of settlement lay a much larger area of land held unimproved by absentee purchasers under the 1851 regulations; of the 19,000 acres nominally in occupation in 1858 in the Port Sorell police district, which extended from Port Sorell to the Blythe river, only 5,803 acres were actually in cultivation.² This belt of alienated but unimproved land was devoid not only of roads but in some cases even of surveyed reserves for roads, thus forcing the 1858 selectors to take up land further back from the coast.

¹ Assessment rolls for the Port Sorell police district, Hobart Town Gazette, 18 May 1858, pp.705-15 and for the Horton district H.T.G., 4 May 1858, pp.579-83.
to which they might have access only on the sufferance of the holders of the 1851 blocks. This difficulty eased from the early 1860s onwards with the forfeiture to the crown of approximately half of the 90,000 acres taken up in the North-West under the 1851 regulations and the resale of the land under the Waste Lands Act.

Small though the North-West was by Australian standards, the fertility of its soil and the abundant rainfall gave it the potential to accommodate as many settlers as a much larger extent of country on the mainland: but to the explorer and to the would-be selector it presented considerable difficulty. The proverbial Tasmanian rain forest rate of walking progress of one mile a day was not strictly applicable to forest which contained but little of the dreaded horizontal scrub, but progress on foot, the only possible means of locomotion in the almost complete absence of navigable rivers, was nevertheless measured in miles rather than tens of miles per day and even foot travel necessitated a considerable amount of scrub cutting as well as tedious deviations around fallen trees. The completeness of the forest cover and the extreme difficulty of climbing trees which might have no branches for 100 feet above the ground restricted the explorer's vision to within a few feet of the spot on which he stood; thus a proper examination of any area required a very considerable time and energy.

The nature of the north-western coastline had been known since James Kelly circumnavigated Van Diemen's Land by whaleboat in 1815-16, but the forest had led
sea explorers to assume, as did Charles Hardwicke in 1823, that the area was '...mountainous, extremely barren, and totally unfit for habitation'. The interior was not penetrated until 1826 when the surveyors of the Van Diemen's Land Company began their long and fruitless search for sheep pastures. Henry Hellyer and his assistants made several journeys southwards through the forest to high mixed forest and grassland area which lay beyond it and although appalled at the density of the tree cover noted the fertility of the soil which lay beneath it. The V.D.L. Co. sought, however, natural pasture and their only contribution to the forest lands was a cart road cut southward from Emu Bay to their ill-fated sheep-farming venture on the sub-alpine natural grasslands of the Surrey Hills. It was hardly, however, an auspicious beginning, for the road, lacking proper foundations, soon became impassable while the sheep decimated by cold, poor pasture and Tasmanian Tigers, had to be removed in 1834.

After the V.D.L. Co. had retreated to the coastal margins of its property little further interest was taken in the interior of the North-West for 25 years. The farmers and timber cutters found resources enough

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within a few miles of the coast and even the sudden extension of alienation under the 1851 regulations was unaccompanied by a commensurate amount of exploration, since many, probably a large majority, of those taking up land made no effort to examine their selections.

The next, and most lasting of all incentives to the further exploration of the North-West was that of the Victorian goldfields. Tasmania longed for its own eldorado and for many years after the mainland rushes had subsided every trace of gold in the island was hailed by press and prospectors as a possible new Ballarat. The North-West was rich in traces of precious and semi-precious metals and a number of settlers made a practice of devoting any time they could spare from their farms to journeys into the forest and the mountains that lay beyond, looking not only for minerals but also for good land and good timber. The giant among these amateur explorers was James Smith, a farmer on the Forth river who had been to the Victorian diggings. Smith undertook many lone trips of epic endurance which were eventually rewarded in 1872 by his discovery, at Mt. Bischoff, of what became the richest tin mine in the world and the beginning of Tasmania's long hoped-for economic recovery. Smith and others, notably S.B. Emmett of Circular Head, sent reports of their journeys to Launceston newspapers and thus became known as a source
of reference for those seeking land as well as minerals. The practice of knowledgeable settlers guiding newcomers to good land, with or without a fee, eventually became so common that the names of those willing to assist selectors were published by the Survey Department in its district surveyors' reports.

The Survey Department made considerable efforts to explore and make known new land, particularly when under the energetic control of James Erskine Calder; in May 1861 the Examiner noted:

If responsible government has at present done but little for Tasmania, one department, at least, must be excepted. The Survey Office as now constituted and conducted is an establishment altogether different from the circumlocutionary bureau it used to be.... The Surveyor-General realises his position as a public servant, who to a large extent is responsible for the rapid settlement of the colony.

In the decade that followed the passage of the Waste Lands Act the old reports of the V.D.L. Co.'s surveyors were republished and new ones made by the

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1 L.E., passim; examples of reports of and by Smith are found in the issues of 10 and 12 May, 21 and 30 June, 15 November and 10 December 1859; 14 and 23 February 1860; 22 September 1866; 12 January and 1 April 1869 and 11 July 1872 and those of Emmett on 21 February and 23 October 1860 and 18 April 1861.

2 L.E., 16 May 1861.

district surveyors, who considerably increased knowledge of the unalienated land in the North-West and made known areas suitable for selection. The Survey Department was instrumental in persuading the government to place sums on the estimates for developmental roads and tracks in the forest lands, which were passed in 1859 and 1865. To publicize the new lands a guide book to crown lands was issued and similar information included in the monthly European summaries of the colonial newspapers.

The passage of the Waste Lands Act in February 1858 was followed by a marked increase in land sales. In the colony as a whole sales of country land rose from 45,059 acres in 1858 to a peak of 110,114 acres in 1861, fell sharply to 39,569 acres in 1862 and then, influenced by sales of land taken up originally under the 1851 regulations, rose to a new peak of 140,108 acres in 1864 after which they fell consistently for the remainder of the decade to a low of only 19,187 acres in 1869.

Land sales in the County of Devon, which included that portion of the North-West extending from Port Sorell to the Blythe river, as well as smaller areas of settlement on the west bank of the Tamar river and on the north bank of the Meander river, suggested that the

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2 ibid., vol.7, 1861, Paper 158; vol.13, 1866, Paper 32.
3 Annual Statistics of Tasmania, Agriculture and Land Sales section, in H.A.J.
Act was achieving its purpose of establishing small settlers on their own land:

### Number and total acreage of lots sold

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Less than 100 acres</th>
<th>Lots of: 100-500 acres</th>
<th>More than 500 acres</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>lots</td>
<td>acres</td>
<td>lots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1858</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2,656</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1859</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2,626</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1860</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>5,696</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1861</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>10,321</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1862</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>4,612</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1863</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>3,090</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1864</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>3,612</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1865</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>4,565</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The settlement of the parish of Kentishbury, between the Mersey and Forth rivers, gives some indication of the working of the act. The auction sales were the domain of the land speculator rather than the intending settler, but more because the latter had sufficient opportunity of acquiring land by selection under section 19 than because he was forced out of the auction by speculators. 5,163 acres were offered for auction for the first time in the parish between the passage of the act and the end of 1863, but of these only 2,422 acres were sold, predominantly at the upset price. 981 acres

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1 ibid.
were later re-offered at rather more than half the original upset level, but of these only 181 acres were sold, all at the new upset price. The policy of re-offering land at reduced upsets was criticised in both press and parliament as a waste of crown assets,¹ a criticism which seemed justified by the fact that nearly all the land which failed to find a buyer was eventually disposed of at the original upset price under section 18.

The purchasers both at auction and under section 18 were predominantly speculators who bought on credit; on the 1868 valuation roll only 472 acres of the land so purchased between 1858 and 1863 were owned by persons (four) then (1868) residing in the parish. Four of the purchasers were extensive speculators whose operations ranged over the whole county, two being publicans, one an investor and one a government surveyor. One exercised his right of selecting one block of up to 320 acres under section 19, the other three having already done so elsewhere. Two of one of the publican's relatives, however, took up land in the parish under section 19, apparently as dummies. These four speculators purchased approximately half the acreage disposed of at auction or under section 18. The remainder was taken either by residents of Launceston or established farmers in various parts of northern Tasmania.

Forty-six selectors took up 6,028 acres in Kentishbury under section 19 between 1858 and 1864, all

¹ L.E., 21 November 1861.
but two of them purchasing on credit. The great majority of selections was made between 1859 and 1862, but by 1866 only half of the 46 were residing on their land; two more subsequently moved into the parish. Nearly all those who did settle appear, however, to have been fairly successful. In 1877 20 of the 23 and in 1889 17 were either themselves still on their selections or had passed them on to their heirs. Two of the original selectors had, by 1889, surrendered their properties to landlords, from whom they leased them, but the remaining selections were all still freeholds and in only two cases smaller than the original area. Nine of the properties had been enlarged by the lease or purchase of additional land, while in several cases the sons of the pioneers had by 1889 taken up land in the parish for themselves.

Few of the remaining 21 selectors under section 19 appear to have had any intention of settling on their land. Ten had abandoned their selections by 1868, these including a bankrupt and his wife who had actually settled on the land and four dummies who either transferred their land to relatives or forfeited it to the crown. Most of the remainder were farmers in the old central northern farming area who kept their

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1 The Traveller through Tasmania, no.19, Tasmanian Mail, 29 December 1883.
Kentishbury selections through the long depression but sold them in the more prosperous years between 1877 and 1889.¹

The Waste Lands Act increased the volume of a movement of people onto the land which had already been evident, in the establishment of small tenant farmers in both the old Midland districts and the forest lands, before its passage. Two groups may be distinguished within this movement, those who had either been born in the colony or had arrived there before 1851 and the recent immigrants who had come to Tasmania since 1851. The census of 2 February 1870 gives place of birth for the population of North-West and far North-West, divided into East and West Devon statistical districts by the Blythe river, as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place of Birth</th>
<th>E. Devon</th>
<th>W. Devon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>3,583</td>
<td>1,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia &amp; Ireland</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>2,197</td>
<td>987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5,956</td>
<td>2,870</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The native born were thus considerably the largest group, especially in West Devon where the figures would have been influenced by the old established V.D.L. Co. tenant


² H.A.J., vol.21, 1871, Paper 1, Table 1 (before p.5).
farms at Emu Bay and Circular Head and also by the fact that fewer large groups of emigrants settled there than in East Devon. The numbers of the native born must however have been swelled by 1870 by children born in the colony to immigrants and it seems likely that in East Devon at least the number of immigrants with their children must have approximately equalled the number of the adult native born and their families.

The immigrants who had come to Australia since 1851 fell into two categories, those assisted and those who came privately. The Tasmanian government provided free passage for approved immigrants throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, apart from the years 1863-5. The inflow was at the rate of some thousands per year during the gold rush period, but fell off rapidly during the early 1860s and remained at a very low ebb until after 1880. To the immigrant paying his own fare the Immigration Act of 1867 offered free land by (a) a land order of £18 for each person over 15 and £9 for each child aged from 1 to 15 years or (b) a grant of 30 acres for a man, 20 acres for his wife and 10 acres for each child. The only condition of either offer was five years' residence in Tasmania before the

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1 F.K. Crowley, Immigration into Tasmania from the United Kingdom, 1860-1919, Papers and Proceedings of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association, vol.3, 1954, pp.103-8; also the annual reports of the Immigration Agent (to 1867) and of the Immigration Board (from 1868) in H.A.J.
title deeds were conferred; any fare-paying passenger coming to the colony, whatever his intended occupation, could therefore take up land and the fact that only 17,700 acres were so disposed of between 1868 and 1879 is a measure of the paucity of newcomers to the colony.

Some of the few who did come were doubtful assets to the colony, as the Devon Herald pointed out in an editorial criticising the Immigration Act:

The native youth who has wielded the axe from his childhood - who is a good ploughman, splitter, fencer, horseman, bullock-driver, dairyman - is the man that is wanted for the subjection of that impenetrable undergrowth ....To these young men we kindly offer the forest lands at the modest price of thirty shillings per acre - we leave them, if they are foolish enough to take the land, to construct their own roads, and get their dearly raised produce to market the best way they can; but to the pale-faced mechanic from London - the tailor, shoemaker, or weaver, from the other overcrowded cities of the old country, we present a freehold farm for the cultivation of which he is utterly unfitted and which he regards as merely a return of his passage money. How many who have received grants of land under the clause in the Emigration Act have become bona fide settlers in Tasmania? It is notorious that in many instances the clauses of the Act which provides for the retention on our soil of the coveted emigrant for a space of five years are set at

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2 Annual Statistics of Tasmania, crown land and agriculture section, in H.A.J.
nought or evaded, the land is retained by subterfuge until the time of forfeiture expires, and then the selector sells, and very probably blesses other colonies with his presence!¹

The work of private societies was more successful. The Colonial Missionary and St Andrew's Societies were the two groups mainly concerned with introducing settlers who came to the North-West. The agent of the former, the Rev. Benjamin Drake, a Congregational Minister, canvassed East Anglia for from 600 to 700 agricultural emigrants, questioning them as to whether they ever got drunk, swore or broke the Sabbath day,² while the latter, organised by a group of Launceston business and professional men with Caledonian connections or sympathies,³ chose settlers from the Tweed valley, the Lothians and Fife. The first of the chosen emigrants reached Tasmania in 1855 and several thousand arrived at intervals at to 1862.⁴ Some, notably a group from Norfolk which arrived in 1857, went direct to the North-West and settled as tenant farmers, others worked for some years on farms in various parts of Tasmania before taking up land of their own in the North-West, notably in the Kentish, Castra-Gawler and Penguin areas. The society immigrants gained an enviable reputation for

¹ D.H., 5 September 1883.
² L.E., 11 April 1857.
³ ibid., 28 August and 13 November 1858 and 6 March and 28 April 1860.
character and industry and they provided, despite their humble origins, many of the leaders of the community for the next half century.

The non-society immigrants consisted largely of young farmers and farmers' sons, rural labourers and some artisans, who had come to Australia during the 1850s either to the goldfields or to work on the properties of farmers and pastoralists. Some examples of these transitions from the Old World to the New are: George Ingram, the son of a Dorset farmer, came to Tasmania in 1853 to oversee a brewery at Longford, near Launceston, run by a former Dorset neighbour. He stayed there five years, opened his own brewery in a neighbouring town and in 1866 purchased and settled on land at Sassafras in the North-West;\(^1\) James Spurr, brought up in a Yorkshire farming family, arrived at Launceston in 1859 without, so he later claimed, a shilling in his pocket. He spent nine years as a working overseer for a Sassafras farmer and then purchased land for himself in the same district;\(^2\) George Redpath arrived in Tasmania from Midlothian in 1851, but left again for the Victorian goldfields where he spent seven years. He then came to the North-West to take up a selection in Kentishbury;\(^3\) William McKenna was brought up to farming at Howth in Ireland; he came to Tasmania

\(^1\) *Cyclopedia of Tasmania* (Hobart, 1900), vol.2, p.246.
\(^2\) ibid.
\(^3\) ibid., p.239.
in 1857 under engagement to an East Coast pastoralist and nine years later settled on a 308 acre selection of his own near Penguin;¹ John McFarlane was trained as a mechanical engineer in a Dumbarton shipyard and came to Launceston under engagement to work on the erection of a patent slipway. The project failed and he worked first as an engineer in Launceston and later in a sawmill on the Mersey before settling on 100 acres in Kentishbury in 1861.²

The settlers who had been in Van Diemen's Land before 1851 appear to have differed little from later arrivals. The same pattern is evident of young men brought up on their father's farms moving onto land of their own, often with an intermediate period of wage labour on the property of some other farmer or pastoralist.³ There is almost no evidence of former convicts settling on the land. It is probable that a careful comparison of the decennial valuation rolls with convict records would reveal more than the very few ex-convicts who are so far known to have settled in the North-West, but the dismal mass of ex-convicts which formed the lowest stratum of Hobart Town and Launceston society was discernible in the North-West only in a relatively small number of wage-labourers who wandered the country on the principle of 'work and burst', often

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¹ ibid., p.360.
² ibid., p.351.
³ Evidence compiled from Cyclopedia of Tasmania and obituaries in L.E., D.H., N.W.P., W.T. and ADV.
following the harvest through each agricultural district in the island. The lowest stratum of society in the North-West was that of the tenant farmers from the West of Ireland settled on Dr Cornelius Casey's Ballamacargy estate at the Forth river, who caused the term Ballamacargyism to become a synonym locally for drunken disorder at public gatherings.

The judgement of the Horton district collector of statistics that the district was '...emphatically the land of the cockatoo or peasant farmer...' was perhaps an unkind one, but the typical settler was certainly a man of humble means and origin. Equally typical was the progress of the settler from a family farm either in the colony or the British Isles through wage labour in the colony, to gain experience and some capital, to his own forest farm; in some cases tenant farming was either a further immediate step or a final resting place. The importance of the Victorian goldfields appears to have been in the boost it gave to Australian crop markets and the resulting encouragement to agricultural settlers to supply that market, rather than in the provision of the diggers with sufficient capital to become farmers. Experience on the goldfields was not uncommon among those who later settled in the North-West, but very few reported any great financial gain therefrom;

1 Table Cape notes, L.E., 6 April 1867.
2 L.E., 6 January 1863.
3 H.A.J., vol.23, 1872, Paper 2, p.188.
James Gibson's estimate that of the V.D.L. Co.'s tenants who went over to Victoria in 1852 one third did well, one third just covered expenses and one third lost substantially¹ appears to have been applicable to others also.

But if the forest settlers were not successful diggers investing their new-found wealth they were equally far from being either the flotsam of the diggings or the outcasts of British or colonial society. Evidence given by witnesses from the North-West in August and September 1862 to the Select Committee on the operation of the Waste Lands Act was generally very favourable to the selectors. J.M. Dooley, the Forth district surveyor, described selectors in his area as including '...very many of the working class eminent for probity, energy, and industry...'; about half of them were, he estimated, immigrants.² Robert Bell, a Latrobe storekeeper, reported that the majority of the many selectors in his district were industrious, hard-working men with families,³ while Bernard Shaw, a gentleman farmer at Port Sorell believed that almost all were men of the labouring class who had saved their wages for the purpose of settling on their land.⁴ Other descriptions

¹ V.D.L.P., O.D. 220, 7 April 1852.
³ ibid., p.13.
⁴ ibid., p.14.
included 'Many of the industrious class...'
"...more especially the working class, consisting of men of small capital'. If an industrious yeomanry could ever exist in Australia, these men constituted it.

The first problem to confront the forest settler was the clearing of his land. The usual method was to ring-bark and leave to die standing all trees of a diameter of more than approximately 18 inches, and at the same time fell, so far as possible to lie in one direction, the surrounding scrub. This was done during the spring and the fallen mass of decaying vegetation left to dry off until late in the following summer when it was set on fire. A summer of, by North-West standards, normal dryness and a good wind at the time the bush was fired would clear all the foliage, leaving the felled spars to be dragged into heaps to be burned again. A good burn was essential for the successful beginning of a farm and a series of abnormally wet summers could place settlers at a serious disadvantage. For the occupiers of established farms close to an area being scrubbed, however, hot, windy weather was a time of continual anxiety for it seemed to be the rule rather than the exception for scrub to be fired regardless of the ability of the person starting the fire to control it and in most summers fires caused considerable damage to crops, fences and sometimes to buildings, besides covering large areas with a pall of smoke and ash.

1 ibid., p.32.
2 ibid., p.35.
The picking up of spars left by the first burn made the land ready for grassing or the planting, with a hand hoe, of a root or grain crop, but it was far from being completely clear. The stones and smaller stumps had to be grubbed out before any horse-drawn cultivating implement could be used on the land and for years afterward every storm would bring down some of the standing ring-barked trees, damaging the surrounding crops and fences and demanding much labour in cutting and removing them; a single storm could bring down 52 large trees on 60 acres of land. The final stage of clearing, usually completed many years after the land had first been scrubbed, was the removal by fire, axe and bullock team of the huge stumps of the ring-barked trees.

The most detailed estimate of the cost of clearing and cropping forest land is that made by J.M. Dooley in 1865 for an area of 20 acres:

1st year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ringing and felling scrub at 25s per acre</td>
<td>£25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burning, picking up all fallen timber to 18&quot; diameter and making land fit for crop at 25s per acre.</td>
<td>£25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>240 rods brush fence at 1s 6d per rod</td>
<td>£18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat seed: say 40 bushels at 6s per bush.</td>
<td>£12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoeing in same at 20s per acre</td>
<td>£20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erection of hut and barn</td>
<td>£15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaping at (say) 12s per acre</td>
<td>£12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carting and threshing</td>
<td>£10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total cost</strong></td>
<td><strong>£137</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1 L.E., 20 May 1865.

Estimated return on 1st year's crops:

Wheat: 30 bushels per acre at 6s per bush. £180
or Oats: 50 bushels per acre at 3s per bush. £160
or Potatoes: 5 tons per acre at 50s per ton £250

2nd year
Clearing fallen branches etc. at 5s per acre £5
Hoeing in seed at 20s per acre £20
Seed (say £12) and reaping (£12) £24
Threshing and carting £10
Total cost £59

Crops returns as 1st year.

3rd year
As 2nd, with change of crop.

4th year
240 rods permanent fencing at 4s per rod £48
New house £30
Additional outbuildings £20
Clearing, burning etc. at 30s per acre £30
Ploughing at 30s per acre £30
Seed and reaping £24
Threshing and carting £10
Grass and clover seed £16
Total cost £200

The increased yield from ploughed and harrowed land should cover the extra costs of the 4th year.

The estimated cost of farm stock and equipment was:

Horse: £20  Team (three pairs) of bullocks: £60
Bullock dray: £20  Harrow: £4. 10s 2 cows: £16
Both Dooley and J.E. Calder considered that a settler on 100 acres needed a capital of at least £150-£200, while the Launceston Examiner put the figure at £200, although this included the payment of £100 in cash for the land. Dooley's estimate of £137 for the first year's operations must have included rations and wages (if any) for those working on the land, but not, apparently, the purchase of working animals and equipment. Survey fees and deposit on 100 acres of crown land purchased on credit would add £3 2s 15d to the £137, so that a settler with a capital of even £200 would not be able immediately to afford a bullock team; there is little doubt however that he could have hired a team either for cash or by part-time labor for the owner.

Any precise estimate of the minimum capital required to establish a farm is, indeed, made very difficult by the fact that goods and services could be obtained by means other than cash. In the first place a settler with adult sons had a source of labour which required to be paid only with rations. Secondly a good axeman could cut on his own land all the materials, save for nails, that he needed to build his cottage or hut, outbuildings and fences. He might also cut and split for sale shingles and palings and blackwood staves for casks, although the return from such sales would by no means cover the cost of clearing the land.

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2 L.E., 12 March 1867.
Still, every beginner with limited capital needed the storekeeper's credit and the opportunity to work part time for wages. The storekeeper would supply a settler regarded as a reasonable risk with all the provisions and equipment he needed and in some cases even pay his crown land instalments; in return the settler delivered his produce and perhaps also timber to the storekeeper. This system was open to abuse, in that a debtor had to take what valuation on his produce the trader chose to make, but there is no evidence of sustained animosity towards the storekeepers as a class in the North-West. The latter had to take considerable risks in making advances to tenant farmers or those buying crown land on credit who had no title to their land and whose only assets to be distrained upon (if the landlord had not seized everything beforehand) were crops and a few animals which, in time of depression, might be almost valueless. It was also possible for a farmer to evade his creditors by making his property over to relatives before declaring himself bankrupt\(^1\) or, in extreme cases, fleeing the colony. The proportion of bankruptcies of merchants and publicans (19) to farmers (28) in the North-West between 1858 and 1870 suggests that the trader was not, on the whole, growing fat at the expense of the farmer.\(^2\)

Equally essential was the opportunity to work for others. The journals of Bartholomew Thomas show that

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1. See proceedings against William Thompson, farmer, of Gawler in L.E., 13 July 1867.
2. L.E., reports of Bankruptcy Court proceedings, passim.
a forest farmer and his sons could be fully employed on their land throughout the year,\(^1\) but a poor man often had to spend the time between planting and harvesting his crop working for others instead of clearing more of his own land. In the winter he might split timber on his own or crown land to be carted out for sale when the roads became passable, while in spring and summer he could work on road contracts or on clearing land for others either for cash or exchange for labour or the use of animals to work on his own land. In the late summer and autumn there was employment in the grain harvest and potato digging. As the Horton district collector of statistics remarked 'there are here no regular employers of labor of the capitalist class. The master of the day is very often the servant of the morrow....'\(^2\)

The forest settlers continued the Tasmanian tradition of wheat growing as far as they were able. The rich soils were capable of bearing prolific crops, yields of 60 bushels to the acre or more being recorded,\(^3\) but wheat was nevertheless a more hazardous crop than the other north-western staples, oats and potatoes, because it was liable to destruction by rust, particularly in seasons of exceptionally heavy rain-fall. North-western, or 'coast' wheat was softer than the 'inland'

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\(^1\) Thomas papers, University of Tasmania archives.


\(^3\) L.E., 21 March 1867; D.H., 4 March 1882.
wheat grown in the older Tasmanian agricultural areas and in consequence brought rather lower prices,¹ but the average yield (within the range of 15 to 25 bushels per acre between 1860 and 1869) was generally the highest of the colony's main wheat-producing areas.² The tradition of wheat as Tasmania's most profitable crop appeared to outweigh the disadvantages and in the Port Sorell district a considerably larger acreage of wheat was planted than any other crop in eight of the ten years between 1860 and 1869. In the wetter Horton district, however, wheat fell from leading crop in 1860 to third place, well behind oats and potatoes, in 1869.³

Oats were generally the second ranking crop in both Port Sorell and Horton between 1860 and 1869, giving an average return of between 20 and 30 bushels to the acre. Potatoes were the first-ranking crop in Horton in nine of the ten years, but in Port Sorell they ranked third in all but one year. The whole district was suited to potato growing and the 'Circular Head redskins' grown in the best of the chocolate soils gained a high reputation in Australian produce markets, although an average return of only some three to four tons per acre between 1860 and 1869 reflected the poverty of cultivation methods.⁴

² Annual statistics of Tasmania in H.A.J.
³ ibid.
⁴ ibid.
The yeoman farmer myth, prevalent in Tasmania about the time of the passage of the Waste Lands Act, emphasised self-sufficiency in food as the first object of the pioneer settler. This was an understandable reaction against the insecurity of the old system of short-term tenancies, but the obviously crucial importance of produce prices to settlers in the North-West suggested that the tradition of cash-cropping and buying provisions from the storekeeper had continued; one visitor to the district told the farmers that:

a little more attention to pastoral pursuits would render them less dependent on salt junk and Irish pork — both very good in their way, but scarcely adapted for the every-day fare of the hard-working bushman and his family.

The case for cash-cropping was put by F.W. Ford, a farmer and merchant at Circular Head:

Mr Theoretical Smith, with two years' capital, goes in for pigs, poultry, sheep, dairy produce, garden, orchard, bees. I will allow him to keep a pig, but he must buy it at potato-digging time: it would be starved in summer. The poultry will destroy his two acre patch of potatoes; the hyenas his eight or ten sheep. It will take him twelve months' hard labor to clear enough ground to keep a cow, which, when he gets, in all probability, will get its back broken by falling trees and limbs. His orchard will be seven years before he gets any return; when he does get it, no market. Bees do not thrive six or eight miles in the interior of a dense forest. Dogwood, musk, and stringy bark will not yield honey for more than four or six weeks in spring. The end of Mr Smith will be — as

1 L.E., 12 February 1859.
soon as his capital is gone - he will be very badly off, although not reduced to potatoes and point. If he does not wake up...
Mr Sams will relieve him of his difficulties....

Practical Jack Brown having paid his deposit, will perhaps lay in two bags [of] flour, a cask [of] salt beef, a bag of sugar, half a chest of tea (I do not care whether he has any of his own or not; for if he is a hardworking, honest, industrious man, any storekeeper will advance him six months' rations), goes into the bush and manages to rough into the ground two acres of potatoes - he will never think of orchard, cows, poultry, bees, etc., because he does not require them for his own use, and they will not pay. In the summer he will earn money twenty different ways. He will either split palings, square blackwood, take a contract from the road trustees, reap, potato-digging, etc, which with his little crop will comfortably keep him in all the necessaries of life. He does not want any luxuries, except a little tobacco and perhaps a bottle of rum at Christmas. As he gradually gets on he will give up working for any one but himself, and at the end of seven years, poultry, sheep, butter, orchard, garden, perhaps even the bees, come of themselves.¹

But the success of cash-cropping depended on the existence of profitable markets and in the 1860s these became ever more difficult to find. The huge post-gold rush increase in the acreage under cultivation in the south-eastern mainland colonies turned Tasmania's former markets in Victoria and South Australia increasingly into competitors for the markets of New South Wales and to a lesser extent Queensland and prices fell yearly. In the Port Sorell district the average price of potatoes

¹ L.E., 28 August 1862.
dropped from £10 per ton in 1858 to £2 10s in 1866, wheat from 9s Od to 3s 6d per bushel and oats from 5s 6d to 2s 3d per bushel. Far from expecting any return on the capital they had invested the forest settlers had to accustom themselves to, at best, getting sufficient from the sale of their crops only to feed and clothe their families, keep the storekeeper and the Lands Department at bay and put in the next season's crop. In September 1862 a Circular Head settler wrote:

With the exception of the occupiers of the [Van Diemen's Land] Company's cleared farms, I do not know of one thriving farmer in the settlement, unless he has had assistance from extraneous sources; not one man who had cleared and farmed a forest farm, paid for labor at current rates, and made it pay. A few more years, and the storekeeper who has supplied the provisions, or the mortgagee who has found the money will own the hardwon freeholds.

The lot of the settlers in the North-West was made all the harder not only by the high cost of clearing their land but also by the difficulty of getting their potatoes and grain to the coast for shipment to the Mainland. A country of dense forest, heavy soil and high rainfall required well-formed and surfaced roads sufficiently clear of timber on either side to allow the sunlight to dry out their surface; shoddily-built roads became impassable quagmires in the autumn and early winter when the cartage of the potato crop was at its peak and transport costs soared because of the extra

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1. L.E., commercial reports, passim; Annual Statistics of Tasmania (Production), in H.A.J.

2. Ibid., 25 September 1862.
time and horse or bullock-power needed to move a load. Good roads were, however, expensive to build and the forest land settlers, finding that the income of the locally-financed roads trusts was quite inadequate to the task, appealed to the state for assistance. But this aid parliament was, for reasons to be discussed in Chapter Five, unwilling to give and it was not until 1865 that a Public Works Loan Act providing some £90,000 for roads, bridges and tramways in the North-West, the North East and the Huon valley area was passed. The distribution of the works was hardly a fair one, for the North-West, the most populous of the three districts, got only one quarter of the funds, a tribute to the energy and influence of the Franklin (Huon) M.H.A., J.D. Balfe. The main works planned for the North-West were two wooden-railed tramways, one to run 19 miles southwards from the mouth of the Leven river and the other six miles south from the mouth of the Cam river; these recognised that what the forest settlers most needed were not trunk roads to Hobart and Launceston but a series of roads or tramways to bring produce from the interior to the coastal ports.\textsuperscript{1} Wooden-railed horse-powered tramways were used widely in Tasmanian forest country during the gold-rush timber boom and evidence taken by a select committee\textsuperscript{2} probably convinced parliament that they were a more suitable means of transport in areas of heavy, wet soil than roads, for

\textsuperscript{1} H.A.J., vol. 13, 1866, Paper 32.

\textsuperscript{2} ibid., vol. 8, 1862, Paper 96.
the 1865 act provided for the construction of six lines in the Huon district as well as the two in the North-West.

This programme would, even if completed, have only begun to remedy the years of neglect of public works. In fact, financial difficulties and doubts about the usefulness of some of the works caused its partial abandonment. In the North-West bridges on the coastal trunk road were built but the tramways were defeated over the question of local liability. The road trusts, which the government intended to assume responsibility for the operation and maintenance of the lines when built, took fright at the supposed cost of operation and vulnerability of the track to destruction by bush fires, with the result that the Cam line was abandoned and the Leven line built as a road surfaced with wooden slabs, an experiment which ensured it a prominent place in the history of all the infamous roads of the North-West.¹

In the Huon district also the tramways were abandoned or converted to roads and, for most of the forest settlers, the act was worse than useless, for its manifest failure either to satisfy the demands of existing settlers or to attract new ones hardened parliament and press against further government spending on what had hitherto been called re-productive works. This change of attitude was particularly important in the Legislative Council, where the works authorised in 1865 had been opposed by a substantial minority of pastoralist members even before its passage. The failure of the act converted the minority into a majority and

¹ ibid., vol.13, 1866, Paper 32; vol.15, 1867, Paper 3.
for more than a decade the Legislative Council consistently rejected any major scheme of public works in the forest lands. The representatives of the old-settled areas began to preach the doctrine of local finance for public works, conveniently forgetting that their own roads had been built at government expense by convict labour, and the cry was taken up even by such erstwhile supporters of new settlement as the Launceston Examiner. Settlement had, it was decided, extended far enough, perhaps too far, and no more government money, destructive as it was of the manly self-reliance of the pioneer, should be sunk in the hopeless forest lands; if new works were required let them be financed by locally-guaranteed loans under the provision of the Local Public Works Act of 1872.

Local government found it, however, very difficult to maintain existing works and, apart from harbour works, almost impossible to finance new ones. The Waste Lands Act of 1863 provided for the return of one quarter of land sales revenue to the district in which it was raised to be expended on public works and the act of 1870 increased the proportion for land selected privately to one half. This provision, when the government obeyed it, enabled some new works to be carried out where there would otherwise have been none, but it did nothing for the areas settled under the 1851 regulation and the 1858 act. The continuing low level of land sales in any case suggested that it would have been wiser to build the roads first and sell the land afterward, for the transfer

1 L.E., 20 August 1870.
of funds by the government to the road trust and the actual carrying-out of the work by the latter was a slow process irksome to the selector paying instalments on land he could not gain access to.\footnote{1}

Private transport enterprise, in the form of a fleet of small sailing vessels, was supreme in carrying produce from the coastal ports to the mainland, but any inclination of investors towards land transport was checked by the fate of the Mersey and Deloraine tramway. The line, financed by a group of Hobart investors, was authorised in 1864\footnote{2} to run some 30 miles south-eastward from the Mersey estuary to Deloraine, the company to receive a grant of 1,280 acres of crown land per mile of line constructed.\footnote{3} The venture was beset by financial difficulties and the first section of the line, from Latrobe to Coiler's Creek (16 miles) was not opened until January 1872. Four months later traffic receipts were so low that the company could no longer afford to operate its only steam locomotive and regular traffic ceased, the line thereafter being worked by horses and all hope of reaching Deloraine abandoned.\footnote{4} Two further north-western tramway projects of the 1870s owed their origins to traffic other than agricultural. The V.D.L.

\footnote{1}{The question of responsibility for public works is discussed more fully in Chapter Five.}
\footnote{2}{H.A.J., vol.11, 1864, summary of proceedings on bills.}
\footnote{3}{ibid., vol.16, 1868, p.96, p.105.}
\footnote{4}{L.E., 13 August 1872; 14 August 1873.}
Co. completed a 45-mile line from Emu Bay to the Mt. Bischoff tin mines in 1878,¹ but as it ran almost entirely through the company's own land which the latter were disinclined to sell at the low prices then prevailing, it was of little assistance to the extension of settlement. In the mid-1870s the River Don Trading Company extended their timber tramway southwards to farmland in the Barrington district,² a successful venture which channelled large quantities of produce to the company's own stores and port at the mouth of the Don.³

The settlers also appealed to the government to ease the terms of credit purchase of crown land, the 1862 select committee on the operation of the 1858 act taking evidence from, among others, 11 residents of the North-West. There was fairly general agreement that low prices and lack of roads to the coast were hurting the settlers and seven of the 11 expected there to be many forfeitures of crown land, the remaining four predicting few or none. For the latter Robert Bell, a storekeeper, remarked that the payment of instalments on crown land '...is the first reserve out of their produce and nothing alarms them so much as the forfeiture - it is the first care.'⁴ Similarly James Munce of Emu Bay, while

¹ V.D.L.P., O.D. 113, 16 February 1878.
² L.E., 18 March 1873; D.H., 28 May 1879.
³ The Traveller through Tasmania, no.29, Tasmanian Mail, 22 March 1884.
acknowledging his district to be '...fearfully depressed in pecuniary matters...', did not expect forfeitures. The majority was, however, less optimistic. J.M. Dooley wrote that to his knowledge about one third of the selectors in his area were trying to borrow, sell or mortgage to meet the coming instalments, while William Moore, a Table Cape timber miller, asserted that 'unless great consideration is shown to the holders of Crown Land in this Colony, the liberal Land Regulations in Victoria and elsewhere will induce many persons to leave'.

The committee was sufficiently moved to recommend that selectors purchasing on credit be allowed to defer payment of instalments if they paid interest thereon and this was embodied in a new Waste Lands Act passed in September 1863. The selector was permitted to have the payment of his outstanding instalments deferred for three years, provided that he paid £6 per cent per annum in advance, with the guarantee that after that time not more than one instalment would be demanded from him in any one year.

1 ibid., p.32.
2 ibid., p.12.
3 ibid., p.6.
4 ibid., p.4.
5 27 Vict., no.22; see L.E., 26 September 1863.
The new act was in general merely a re-enactment of that of 1858, apart from a reduction in the minimum upset price of land which had never been held under grazing licence from 10s to 5s per acre, but it included a second recommendation of the 1862 select committee by permitting holders of land under the 1851 regulations, the ten-year deferred payment for which was then becoming due, to purchase the land on credit under the provisions of the act. This further easing of terms, regardless of residence or improvement, for purchasers who had already had the pick of the forest lands on completely deferred payment, aroused considerable criticism. One North-West selector pointed out how much the absentee owners of 1851 lands had already extorted from settlers unfortunate enough to fall into their clutches:

The fortunate possessor of 500 acres kindly offered to take £500 per cent on his bargain with the government; or if the intending farmer preferred to become a tenant he could have as much forest land as he chose at the very modest rental of 10s. per acre!! Too many accepted the last proposition, and entered upon heavy scrub and timbered land to toil like Virginia negroes, only to find after a few years that their money was gone, their rent overdue, their labour lost, their hopes blasted...over and over again, have they paid the upset price of the land to the pre-emptive holder....

The 1863 act temporarily boosted crown land sales which reached 140,108 acres in 1864, although the average price received per acre, which had been rather more than £1 between 1859 and 1862, fell to

---

1 L.E., 30 October 1862.
approximately 15s in 1863 and 1864 and 11s in 1865 and 1866, a result of poorer land being sold off very cheaply at auction. After 1865, however, land sales, checked by the Chapman ministry's policy of higher upsets, fell precipitately to a low of only 19,181 acres in 1869 and then fluctuated between approximately 20,000 and 45,000 acres in each year of the decade 1870-1879 other than 1874 (72,736 acres) and (52,880 acres). This fall was both a cause and a symptom of almost 20 years of economic stagnation in the colony which followed the end of the gold rush boom. It was not, on the whole, a period of great hardship for the able-bodied worker or for the pastoralist, but it was, at least until the development of tin mining in the later 1870s one almost devoid of material progress. Emigration to the mainland more than counter-balanced immigration, while the cropping of new land in the North-West and other forest areas had to be measured against the gradual abandonment of crop land in the old, soil-impoverished Midland areas to pasture or scrub. In 1858 147,454 acres were in crop in Tasmania, in 1880 140,788.

The greatest check to Tasmanian agricultural progress was the collapse of the wheat and oats export trade in

2. ibid., vol.19, 1870, Paper 1, p.132.
4. ibid., Statistics of Tasmania (Production).
the face of increasing mainland competition. In 1860
the colony exported 156,043 bushels of wheat in
approximately equal quantities to Victoria and
New South Wales; by 1880 exports had fallen to only
63,928 bushels, over half of which went to the
United Kingdom. Oats exports fell from 546,590 bushels
in 1860 to 181,619 in 1880, Victoria in both cases being
the principal customer. Potato exports were better
maintained, 7,002 tons being shipped, mainly to Victoria,
in 1860 and 6,387 tons, mainly to Victoria and
New South Wales in 1880.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}} The Tasmanian farmer thus,
where he could afford to buy animals and had a property
large enough to support him, changed from cultivation to
livestock keeping, but the forest farmers who generally
could not and did not, had to go on cropping their land
and sell their produce for what they could get.

Two courses in land policy were open to the
succession of Tasmanian ministries which struggled with
the financial difficulties resulting from this
stagnation. The first was to accept the fall in land
sales as inevitable and reduce government spending to a
corresponding level with the diminished revenue. The
second was to attempt to attract a large number of new
settlers to the remaining unalienated forest lands by
easy terms of sale and the expenditure of loan money on
the provision of adequate roads and bridges; by this
means the producing population of the colony and hence
the revenue would be considerably increased. Despite
the re-iteration of pious ministerial hopes the first

\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}}
alternative was, on the whole, tacitly accepted and a long period of laissez-faire land policy ensued, not only towards new settlement but also towards the needs of farmers already established.

The only further alteration to the terms of land sale was the provision of two alternatives in credit payment to the $1/5$ premium and instalments over eight years system already in force. Under the Waste Lands Act No. 4 of 1867 lots of up to 100 acres could be selected at £1 per acre in specially-designated Agricultural Areas, for which, in return for a $1/3$ premium, the selector could pay 6d per acre for the first three years, 1s for the fourth and fifth years and 2s for the sixth to twentieth years. The government's view appeared, however, to be that Agricultural Areas should be established only where land could be sold by no other means and as the only Area actually declared (Gould's Country in the North-East) failed to attract settlers the act was in fact a dead letter. In 1868 the Waste Lands Act No. 5 permitted the selection of 320 acres at £1 on 14 years' credit, the terms being $1/3$ premium, 1s per acre for the first two years and 2s per acre for the remaining 12. The land was to be occupied by the purchaser or his representative within one year of selection, and to remain so until the land was paid for, but improvements were not stipulated. ¹ These terms were intended to meet the criticism made to the 1867

¹ 31 Vict., no. 18 and 32 Vict., no. 18; for summary see Walch's Tasmanian Almanac (Hobart, annually), 1869, pp. 96-8.
Select Committee by J.D. Balfe that the original credit terms took too much of the selector's money in the first years of settlement when returns from the land were smallest.¹

The acts of 1863, 1867 and 1868 were combined into a new Waste Lands Act passed in 1870 and which remained in effect until 1890.² Thus the price of £1 per acre for land privately selected remained inviolate and the privilege of credit must still be paid for at a respectable rate of interest; the longer the selector had to pay the more he eventually paid. Nor did the intending settler have a really feasible alternative in the auction sale, not only because of the small man's distrust of auction, but also because the upset price of good forest land was unlikely to fall much below £1 per acre.

Abandoned by the government (save for the annual collection of credit instalments) the forest settlers struggled on in the face of a depression which seemed to become yearly worse. The lowest ebb came in 1871 and 1872, when ruinous prices were made worse by poor harvests. The Victorian market contracted in the face of protective tariffs and increasing home self-sufficiency and Tasmanian potato exports had to be concentrated more and more on Sydney, save when the Warrnambool crop was affected by drought or disease.³

² 34 Vict., no.10; see also Walch, op. cit., 1871, pp.68-9.
³ H.A.J., Statistics of Tasmania (Interchange); L.E., 17 August 1871.
In June 1870 the price of potatoes at Melbourne did not even cover the cost of taking them from field to market:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>£</th>
<th>s.</th>
<th>d.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Digging (av.)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carting (&quot; )</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freight</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>15.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bags</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>10.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wharfage, etc.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duty (10% ad val.)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5.</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commission (5%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchange (1%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance (1%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4½</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cost £ 2. 13. 4½ per ton
Sold for 2. 10. - " "
Loss £ 3. 4½ " "

In 1871, '...such a terrible year', Victorian tariffs were increased to 10s per ton on potatoes, 25 per cent on grain and 100 per cent on flour. Thereafter Tasmanian oats continued to find a market in Victoria, but the potatoes went mainly to New South Wales and wheat exports gradually declined. In both April 1870 and May 1871 potatoes were selling at Emu Bay for only 30s per ton and in the latter case only the very best samples were saleable at all. A trial shipment to Adelaide in 1871 returned only about 25s per ton over the cost of shipping and marketing.

1 V.D.L.P., O.D. 10, 13 June 1870.
2 ibid., O.D. 25, 10 July 1871.
3 ibid., O.D. 26, 7 August 1871.
4 ibid., O.D. 8, 18 April 1870; O.D. 22, 9 May 1871.
5 ibid., O.D. 24, 12 June 1871.
The effects of these very low prices were made worse by the generally low standard of cultivation and hence of yields per acre in the North-West. The soil was naturally fertile, but it could not stand up for ever to the traditional Tasmanian practices of over-cropping and under-nourishing. The farmers in the Port Sorell police district were

...of the average middle class mostly, many of them knowing little about rotation farming and generally waiting to see what those considered more enlightened do and then following in many instances their not very good example.  

The usual rotation of crops was a primitive one, with a potato crop being grown one year, a grain crop the next and the land then being left to grass. In 1871 there was not a single manure pit in the Port Sorell district, with the result that the best of the manure was washed away before it could be put on the fields; most manure in any case suffered by the poor quality of straw used in bedding animals, which usually averaged three hundredweight of fern, thistle and other weeds to the ton. Bone-dust and guano were very rare, while the absence of lime to counteract the decomposition of vegetable matter on newly-cleared land made wheat susceptible to fungus, rust and blight. Grain crops tended to be sown too thickly and to be beaten down by wind and rain, making them difficult to reap and liable to discolouration.  


2 ibid.
Despite the high cost and poor quality of manual labour, there were few horse-drawn field implements other than single-furrow ploughs and harrows,\(^1\) for there were still too many stumps and logs in the fields to allow their use, even had the farmers had the money to buy them. In 1872 the only field machines other than ploughs and harrows in the Port Sorell and Horton police districts were 19 scarifiers ('...ponderous masses of wood and iron...'), one reaping machine, for which only nine acres could be found suitable and one seed-drill, also underemployed.\(^2\) In 1871 the only steam threshing machine in the Port Sorell district was almost immobilised because of the state of the roads.\(^3\) Small annual ploughing matches began in the North-West in 1862\(^4\) and in 1874 the Devon Agricultural Association, based at Don, was formed,\(^5\) to be followed by the North-Western Agricultural Association at Latrobe in 1875,\(^6\) but these did little more than organise annual shows.

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1 ibid.; see also the table of larger farm implements in the crown lands and agriculture section of the annual Statistics of Tasmania, in H.A.J.
3 ibid., vol.21, 1871, Paper i, p.195.
4 L.E., 25 September and 6 November 1862.
5 ibid., 24 June 1875.
6 ibid., 3 April 1875.
The privations of the settlers when the depression was at its worst were so acute that the whole North-West seemed to be on the verge of bankruptcy and starvation. In June 1870 the manager of the V.D.L. Co. reported 'I have seen a good deal of poverty amongst the small farmers in New Zealand, but I never saw anything to equal the utterly depressed condition of this coast'. The suffering in 1871 was '...immense...many families having had to live on potatoes, without flour, tea or sugar'. Yet the selectors, at least, survived, as is shown by the following table of the fate of selections made on credit in the Port Sorell police district between 1858 and 1864:

---

1 V.D.L.P., O.D. 10, 13 June 1870.
2 ibid., O.D. 30, 27 November 1871.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Valuation</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1868</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1868</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1868</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The column classifications are:

1. Lots occupied by the original selector who was at the date of valuation living in the same parish as the selection.
2. Ditto who was not living in the same parish.
3. Lots leased by original selector to a tenant.
4. Lots occupied by the original selector as tenant to some other person.
5. Balance of lots selected 1858-64 which do not appear in the valuation roll under the name of the original selector.

Thus a large majority of those who actually settled on their selections managed to keep them. The tenant farmers were less fortunate, although this is hardly

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surprising in view of the evidence of their extreme poverty; in November 1869 J.W.N. Smith reported that with four exceptions there was not a tenant farmer in the Forest area of Circular Head who had £5 in cash\(^1\) and in December 1870 that the Company's tenants were nearly all paupers.\(^2\) Of 52 tenants residing in the parish of Abbotsham and holding lots of 20 acres or more in that parish in 1868 only ten were still on their farms in 1877,\(^3\) although several others had either passed their holdings on to relatives or were still in the parish on small allotments, presumably living by wage labour.

In spite of the depression some new settlers did come to the North-West between 1865 and 1880. The majority appear to have been Tasmanian farmers' sons, who were by then being recruited not only from the older-settled parts of the island but also from the North-West itself; in the late 1870s, for example, the sons of some of the Colonial Missionary Society immigrants who had come to the Don river in 1857 began taking up crown land in the Wilmot district.\(^4\) Some settlers still arrived from the United Kingdom. Timothy Midgley, of a Yorkshire farming family, arrived in Tasmania in 1870 to work for an uncle, subsequently

\(^1\) V.D.L.P., O.D. 1, 11 October 1869.

\(^2\) ibid., O.D. 17, 28 December 1870.

\(^3\) Assessment rolls of 1868 and 1877, op. cit.

\(^4\) D.H., 12 June 1878.
leasing and then selecting land of his own.¹ Thomas Cutts came from a Yorkshire farming and farm machine making family and was sent to Tasmania in 1870 in charge of a threshing machine for a Port Sorell farmer; he worked for the latter for two years and then selected land for himself in the district.² The assisted immigrants of the late 1850s were still aspiring to the land; William Clarke, a St Andrew's Society immigrant of 1859, selected 100 acres west of the Cam river in 1872 after spending the intermediate years in wage labour.³

The old immigration societies were dead, but there was one new group venture. In 1866 Lieutenant-Colonel Andrew Crawford persuaded the government to reserve 50,000 acres of land at Castra, 16 miles south of the mouth of the Leven river, for the settlement of retired Indian army and civil service officers. The Anglo-Indians were offered no terms of purchase more favourable than those available to all under the Waste Lands Act of 1863 and the Immigration Act of 1867 and the object of concentration in one area was to provide the settlers with congenial neighbours and prevent their efforts to subdue the forest being laughed at by '...hard-headed and hard-handed...' cockatoo neighbours. Crawford canvassed India by pamphlet and newspaper, comparing the beauty of the North-West and profitability of farming there more than favourably with the difficulties of

² ibid., p.246.
³ ibid., p.310.
living on a pension in England in the style to which the Anglo-Indian was accustomed. The scheme aroused considerable interest and by 1877 39 would-be settlers had taken up 8,096 acres in the reserve. Few, however, actually came to Castra and fewer still remained, for the difficulties, in particular the dreadful state of the roads, proved to be much greater, and the profits much less, than Crawford had estimated. One sadder but wiser Anglo-Indian recounted his experiences in the Bombay Gazette, emphasising the impossibility of a gentleman farmer profitably establishing himself in the forest lands. His initial outlay amounted to £1,000:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100 acres at Castra + agency and road rates</td>
<td>£234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ringing trees at 5s per acre</td>
<td>£32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scrubbing at £1.5s per acre</td>
<td>£200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Picking up at £1 per acre</td>
<td>£160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clearing trees for farmhouse, garden &amp; barn</td>
<td>£10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fencing, post &amp; rail</td>
<td>£200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm house</td>
<td>£60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small tools</td>
<td>£9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barn &amp; outhouses</td>
<td>£45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horse &amp; cart</td>
<td>£50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>£1,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To put this land into crop of wheat cost, per acre:

Seed 5s; threshing & sacking up 14s; chipping in £1; carting to market 15s; reaping & carting 16s.

= £3.10s

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1 A. Crawford, Letter to the Officers of H.M. Indian Services, op. cit.

The crop (23 bushels to the acre sold for 3s 6d per bushel) yielded a profit of 10s 6d per acre. Wheat was however a hazardous crop at Castra liable to the ravages of the grub, caterpillar and rust and the safer crops of oats and potatoes would both, on prevailing prices, have been sold at a substantial loss; the price of 30s per ton then being offered for potatoes at the Leven would only have paid the cost of carting them from Castra. Thus the settler could expect no return on his investment and would, in fact, be lucky if he got enough from selling a crop to pay the cost of growing it.¹

The Castra scheme was an almost complete failure, only two selections being actually occupied in 1877,² but despite this Anglo-Indians did come to the North-West to settle in increasing numbers, mostly purchasing farms already cleared. The best-known of them was Edward Braddon, but there were others also who by virtue of their education, forthrightness and love of organisation became accepted as leaders by the small farmers in a most unusual alliance for the bludgeoning of the government and betterment of the community.

In the later seventies crop prices began very slowly to rise, although there were still disastrous lows, as at the Leven in March 1876, when the price of 1s 3d per bushel offered for oats was equal only to the

¹ D.H., 9 September 1880.
² Assessment roll of 1877, op. cit.
cost of reaping, threshing and bagging. The opening-up of the Mt Bischoff tin mines, the beginning of the long-hoped for Tasmanian mineral boom, was a factor in this gradual improvement, but its roots were more far-reaching and will be considered in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 3.

RECOVERY, DEPRESSION AND DIVERSIFICATION

1880-1895

During the 1880s the economic position of the forest land farmers substantially improved. The new decade began badly with poor crops and low prices, but progressed through several seasons of generally fair prosperity to end in conditions which, by comparison with those of the preceding 30 years, verged on a boom.\(^1\) This improvement derived from the growth of Australian urban and industrial food markets, in particular the Sydney and to a lesser extent Melbourne, potato markets and the meat market of the western Tasmanian mining fields. A comparison of the three year average of annual stock and crop returns of the Port Sorell and Emu Bay districts for 1879-1881 with those of 1889-91 indicates the main trends in farm activity:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1879-81</th>
<th>1889-91</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All land cultivated</td>
<td>55,656 acres</td>
<td>96,445 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of which</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent artificial grass</td>
<td>29,079 &quot;</td>
<td>62,479 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes</td>
<td>3,009 &quot;</td>
<td>9,007 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oats</td>
<td>6,934 &quot;</td>
<td>9,103 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>4,481 &quot;</td>
<td>4,514 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle (Dairy)</td>
<td>5,419</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle (Other)</td>
<td>23,057 no.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1. V.D.L.P., O.D. 411a, January 1890.
2. Compiled from annual Statistics of Tasmania (Production), in H.A.J.
Tasmanian what exports virtually ceased after 1882 and the colony, unable to compete in cost and quality with the mainland product, became increasingly an importer of food grains.¹ Some urged North-West farmers to combine to ship grain to England, where the prevailing price seemed likely to amply repay such a venture,² but doubts about the real cost of shipment and also of the willingness of local creditors to postpone their annual settlement of accounts until the proceeds of such exports could reach Tasmania appear to have been enough to discourage any experiments.³ The local market was sufficient to maintain the absolute acreage in wheat during the decade, but as new land too cold and wet for the crop was opened up further from the coast the wheat acreage relatively declined.

Tasmanian exports of oats fluctuated wildly in response to the volume and quality of mainland and New Zealand crops, as the figures for the second half of the decade show:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Victoria</th>
<th>N.S.W.</th>
<th>All Tasmanian Exports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>15,552 bush.</td>
<td>12,143 bush.</td>
<td>27,695 bush.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>72,792 &quot;</td>
<td>145,960 &quot;</td>
<td>218,752 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>15,564 &quot;</td>
<td>19,128 &quot;</td>
<td>39,692 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>104 &quot;</td>
<td>3,000 &quot;</td>
<td>3,104 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>237,623 &quot;</td>
<td>31,468 &quot;</td>
<td>269,091 &quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Compiled from annual Statistics of Tasmania (Interchange), in H.A.J.
² D.H., 9 April and 8 June 1881.
³ ibid., 11 June 1881.
⁴ Compiled from annual Statistics of Tasmania (Interchange), in H.A.J.
The failure of the New Zealand harvest in 1882 caused the price of oats in the North-West to range as high as 3s 6d per bushel, but in general the crop sold at 2s 0d or rather less throughout the decade. This, according to the V.D.L. Co., was considerably less than a remunerative price if due allowance was made for land rent as well as actual production costs. J.W.N. Smith considered 2s 6d per bushel to be the lowest satisfactory price:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land rent</td>
<td>£1. 0s 0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 ploughings @ 8s.</td>
<td>£1. 4s 0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 harrowings @ 1s.</td>
<td>12s 0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manure</td>
<td>6s 0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seed: 2½ bush @ 2s 6d</td>
<td>6s 3d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reaping and stacking</td>
<td>15s 0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrashing (say 40 bush.)</td>
<td>10s 0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bags @ 3d each</td>
<td>10s 0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carting @ 1d each</td>
<td>3s 4d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£5 6s 7d</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit by 40 bush @ 2s 6d</td>
<td>£5 0s 0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; straw</td>
<td>10s 0d</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profit 3s 5d per acre</td>
<td>£5 10s 0d</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

That farmers in the North-West could continue to produce large crops of oats at a considerably lower price, even if allowance is made for cheaper seed, is a measure of the extent to which the small settler absorbed costs by crediting himself with little or no land rent or wages.

The foundation of the new prosperity of the farmer, particularly the small man on 100 acres or less, was the potato. Tasmanian exports fluctuated considerably,

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2 ibid., O.D. 173, 8 September 1881.
but the general tendency was towards a substantial rise, particularly during the later years of the decade. In 1880 the colony exported 6,387 tons of potatoes, in 1889 41,390 tons. The North and far North-West produced the major part of the Tasmanian export crop; in the first seven months of 1889, for example, outward shipments from northern Tasmanian ports consisted of:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Port</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Launceston</td>
<td>6,110 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penguin</td>
<td>15 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mersey</td>
<td>16,630 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burnie</td>
<td>1,801 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulverstone</td>
<td>291 &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circular Head</td>
<td>5,034 &quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Sydney market was the principal one and the colony supplied a major part of it; between 1 May and 30 September 1885 13,955 tons of potatoes were received in Sydney from Tasmania, compared with 6,381 tons from New Zealand and 5,830 from Victoria. The quality of potatoes grown in the North-West was such that in 1889 they sold in Sydney at 15s 0d per ton more than those from Warrnambool and 10s Od more than the New Zealand product. In general, however, farmers gained more from the increased volume of sales rather than from markedly increased prices; early in the decade the price at North-West ports was in the vicinity of £2 per ton, but between 1883 and 1885 it tended to fall to £1 10s 0d

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1 Statistics of Tasmania (Interchange) in H.A.J.
2 N.W.P., 5 September 1889.
3 D.H., 20 October 1885.
4 V.D.L.P., O.D. 403, 5 November 1889.
or slightly less, rising to between £2 and £3 by the end of the decade.¹

The cattle industry also generally prospered. Low prices in the late 1870s had checked cattle breeding in Tasmania, graziers finding wool-growing more profitable, and despite import duties of 1s 6d per 100 lbs on beef and £1 10s 0d per head on live cattle² the colony was unable to satisfy its own beef requirements, which were stimulated by an increasing population of miners who scorned mutton and could afford to pay for newly-killed beef. The demand so outstripped the supply that by 1883 young cattle only two-thirds the weight of fully-grown animals were being killed; thus as more animals had to be killed to yield the same amount of meat the growth of the colony's cattle population was further retarded.³

The duty on live cattle was repealed in 1884, that on meat remaining,⁴ and cattle prices temporarily fell,⁵ but by October 1886 store cattle were again fetching high prices⁶ and they generally continued to do so until 1890 when a price-cutting war in the import of New South Wales

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¹ D.H. and N.W.P., commercial reports on editorial page of each issue.
² Duties were listed annually in Walch's Tasmanian Almanac (Hobart) and in Statistics of Tasmania (Interchange) in H.A.J.
³ V.D.L.P., O.D. 223, December 1883.
⁴ Statistics of Tasmania (Interchange) in H.A.J.
⁵ V.D.L.P., O.D. 260, 28 April 1885.
⁶ Ibid., O.D. 311, 20 October 1887.
cattle was begun by the steamship companies trading to Tasmania.¹

High cattle prices were, however, of more benefit to the larger farmer owning several hundred acres or more than to the small man. The V.D.L. Co considered the most profitable system of forest land development to be to clear and grass land for cattle² and to this end began an extensive clearing programme at Ridgley, south of Emu Bay, in 1885.³ For the small farmer, however, the attractions of cattle-raising had to be reckoned against the cost of purchasing stock, clearing sufficient land to maintain them and the reserve of capital needed to insure against a temporary fall in selling prices or ruinous destruction of pasture by fire or caterpillar. A meeting at Latrobe in August 1884, dominated by some of the districts largest landowners, condemned the proposed repeal of the stock import duty as an injustice to the small farmer,⁴ but the latter did not necessarily agree. One maintained that the small man was a consumer rather than a producer of meat, buying two-thirds of what he ate:

I know several large families who are engaged at road making, splitting, carrying, ploughing (for other people) and various other works, according to the time of year - men who do not rear 3 calves a year on their small farms....the small farmer (as a rule) buys and sells at auction, in which

¹ Ibid., O.D. 411a, January 1890.
² Ibid., O.D. 403, 5 November 1889.
³ Ibid., O.D. 254, 4 February 1885.
⁴ D.H., 15 August, 1884.
case he is a gainer by being able to buy cheap, and keep a larger stock than as if they were dear.\footnote{Ibid., 26 September 1884; \textit{W.T.}, 12 August 1891.}

Thus although a small farmer might grass newly-cleared land for cattle, especially if the road access was not sufficient for potato cartage, he was less likely wholly to abandon cultivation for stock raising irrespective of the probable profits.

If improved markets were the first stimulus to prosperity in the 1880s improved transport was the second. The spur to the Tasmanian economy provided by the tin mines of Mt Bischoff and the North-East encouraged the Legislative Council at last to assent to some, if not all, of the increasing number of public works proposals sent up to it by the House of Assembly, particularly if they improved access to mineral as well as agricultural areas. The result for the North-West was a very considerable inflow of government money for works other than those required under the Waste Lands Act:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Roads £</th>
<th>Railways £</th>
<th>Harbours £</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1877</td>
<td>47,000</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>16,700</td>
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<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>33,300</td>
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<td>1882</td>
<td>21,300</td>
<td>120,000</td>
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<td>1883</td>
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<td>1886</td>
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<td>1887</td>
<td>29,270</td>
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<td>3,500</td>
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<td>1888</td>
<td>23,550</td>
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<td>8,975</td>
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<td>1889</td>
<td>24,900</td>
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<td>30,754</td>
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<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>22,550</td>
<td></td>
<td>5,482</td>
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<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>2,700</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This investment in public works did not reverse the basic government policy of building roads after, rather than before, selection, nor did it provide every farmer already established with a good road. It did, however, result in a substantial improvement in the condition of the major roads running inland from the coastal ports, so that if the back-country farmer could get his produce out over the first few miles of bye-roads to the main arterial road of the district he was usually assured of accomplishing the rest of his journey to the coast without difficulty.

Compiled from annual reports of the Engineer-in-Chief in H.A.J.; Mersey and Deloraine Railway Act, (47 Vic. 22); Railway Construction Act, 1885 (49 Vic. 41).
The Tasmanian government entered the field of railway operation in 1872\(^1\) with its acquisition of the 5'3" gauge line, opened privately in 1896, from Launceston to Deloraine.\(^2\) In 1883 construction of further lines to the 3'6" gauge was begun to link the main areas of population in the colony. A third rail for 3'6" operation was laid over the Launceston-Deloraine railway and an extension westward to Formby (later West Devonport), superseding the old Mersey and Deloraine tramway, was opened in 1885, the line being further extended to Ulverstone in 1890.\(^3\)

The coming of the railway helped to break down the pioneer isolation of those communities sufficiently close to it to benefit from the frequent cheap excursions which took them to Launceston to visit exhibitions, entertainments and relatives\(^4\) and which brought to the North-West increasing numbers of tourists as well as such celebrities as the touring M.C.C. team.\(^5\) The effect of the railway on freight movement was, however, less marked. The bulk of produce leaving the North-West was

\(^1\) L.E., 9 July 1872.
\(^3\) Annual reports of the Tasmanian Government Railways, in H.A.J.
\(^4\) D.H., 11 September 1888; N.W.P., 11 June 1889.
\(^5\) D.H., 13 January 1888.
destined for the mainland, but even in intra-state movements where the railway offered an alternative to sea transport the very limited tonnage consigned by rail bore out complaints that rail freights were too high to compete with coastal shipping. In 1893 only 2,600 tons of freight were consigned from the North-West to stations on the Hobart-Launceston line and less than 800 tons to Launceston itself; by contrast over 13,000 tons were sent to Devonport from other north-western stations, the great bulk of which must have been for shipment.

The railway did, however, supersede road transport between the farming areas through which it ran and the coastal ports and it also hastened the trend towards fewer, larger and better served ports by enabling produce to be carried economically on land for a greater distance. Rail freights were so much cheaper than road that farmers in the Barrington district would trans-ship their produce from cart to train at Spreyton for a rail journey of only three miles to Devonport. However the Launceston-Ulverstone line was of use as a means of transport to the coast only to the relatively small number of settlers who lived near it and the settlers and their representatives had to fight for another 25 years before the building of the most necessary lines of all, the branches from the coastal ports inland.

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1 N.W.P., 10 January 1893.
3 N.W.P., 7 July 1892.
Improvement was not confined to land transport. In the 1870s the characteristic merchant vessel of the North-West, apart from a few very small steamers, had been the schooner or ketch, whose ability to get into the smallest haven had to be measured against slow voyages of unpredictable duration and a by no means negligible risk of being driven ashore and wrecked. By 1885, however, steam ships were handling the bulk of the produce exported from the deep water ports more quickly and at lower rates than sailing vessels, while by the end of the decade steamers of between 1,000 and 2,000 tons gross were trading between Devonport, Burnie (Emu Bay) and Sydney.

The big steamers sounded the death-knell of the smaller ports and doomed to relative stagnation the townships which lived upon them. In the 1889 season potatoes sold for 5s 0d per ton more at Devonport than at Ulverstone, because the former port had a regular weekly steamer service, and thus the traditional hinterlands of the smaller ports tended to be absorbed by those of Devonport and Burnie. In 1893, for example, the Ulverstone railway station consigned 3,813 tons of goods to Devonport, while Kindred siding, which lay considerably nearer to Ulverstone than to Devonport, sent 265 tons to the latter and almost nothing to the former. At Latrobe the branch railway line constructed

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1 V.D.L.P., O.D. 274, 1 December 1885.
2 D.H. and N.W.P., shipping reports in each issue.
3 N.W.P., 8 June 1889.
to the wharf, once the centre of Mersey river produce shipping, was virtually unused,\textsuperscript{1} for the railway wagons passed through the town to the steamer's side at Devonport. Even where there was no railway to the larger ports it was sometimes considered worthwhile to send cargoes along the coast by sailing vessel for trans-shipment to the steamers, as for example between Port Sorell and Devonport.\textsuperscript{2} The concentration of port facilities was, however, retarded by the failure of the politicians to heed the advice of the general manager of the government railway system that the railway be extended westward along the coast from Ulverstone through Burnie and Wynyard to Flowerdale, thereby allowing all exports to be channelled through Devonport and Burnie. Instead, in deference to local jealousies, expensive and futile development works at the small ports of Ulverstone, Penguin and Wynyard were carried out at intervals up to the First World War.

The improvement in crop prices and transport during the 1880s was reflected in a markedly higher level of crown land sales. Early in the decade sales were checked by low prices, lack of roads and the drawing-off of potential young settlers by the high wages offered in the tin mines,\textsuperscript{3} but from 1884 to 1889 the government

\textsuperscript{1} \textit{N.W.P.}, 21 March 1903.
\textsuperscript{2} \textit{D.H.} and \textit{N.W.P.}, shipping reports.
disposed of between 50,000 and 69,000 acres annually, with the exception of a low of 35,671 acres in 1888. Alienation in the two North-West counties of Devon and Wellington accounted for between one third and one half of this acreage, the emphasis in sales moving westward from the former to the latter county as selectors realised the quality of the huge tract of myrtle forest extending southward from the Table Cape settlement to the Hellyer and Arthur rivers, hitherto considered poor land.¹ But there were still complaints of the failure of road construction to keep pace with selection. In 1889 the first settlers in the Nietta and Wilmot parishes were unable to grow crops on land they had cleared because they had no means of getting them to market; consequently the land was put down to grass for cattle and the men had to seek work elsewhere to keep their families.² In the lower Wilmot valley in January 1891 one selector sold out because of lack of access to his land, while others chose to rent farms rather than settle on their own selections.³ A decline in crown land sales in the Latrobe district in 1889 was attributed by the local government surveyor to the fact that much of the settlers' surplus capital had been invested in the private purchase of partially improved

¹ Ibid., Vol.9, 1886, Paper 67, p.4; Statistics of Tasmania (Production), H.A.J., annually.
³ N.W.P., 31 January 1891.
properties for which there had been a steady demand at £2-£6 per acre.\(^1\)

The traditional pattern of the sons of small farmers already established taking up new selection was still evident, but during the 1880s more interest was shown in the North-West by wealthier purchasers than hitherto. The Anglo-Indians continued to arrive, while the V.D.L. Co found that enquiries for land came more from well-to-do people such as doctors and relatively wealthy British farmers than from the small settler.\(^2\) In December 1891 the Melbourne Mercantile firm of Phipps Turnbull and Co offered on behalf of a syndicate to purchase the V.D.L. Co's entire estate;\(^3\) the offer was rejected,\(^4\) but the very fact that it was the first one made since the company was formed in 1824 is a measure of the increasing interest shown by the man of capital in good agricultural land.

If life in the 1880s was still hard for the newest of the selectors and the poorer tenants it had definitely improved for many of the older-established settlers.

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3. Ibid., O.D. 465, 12 December 1891.
4. Ibid., O.D. 473, 11 March 1892.
In 1884 a visitor to Nook, in the Kentishbury area noted that

Mr Alex Hamilton...has been here 13 years, and has done wonders. The home farm is a capital one, 100 acres, and there is a thoroughly good homestead and outbuildings. Besides this he has acquired by purchase privately, and from Government, two 50 acre lots, a 96, and one of 187, 200 acres are under crop and grass. Mr and Mrs Hamilton have six sons and four daughters....They are St Andrew's Society emigrants, and no better example of what thrift and industry will acquire can be pointed out.

At Sassafras Henry Rockliff, a Yorkshire immigrant who had begun life in Tasmania as a farm manager, had by 1884 acquired some 1,000 acres and was able to provide his employees with a meal of '...boiled jowl of bacan (Bath chap), Yorkshire meat pastry and plenty of potatoes, wheaten bread, butter, and tea'. Many of the settlers had replaced, or were about to replace, their original rough cottages with new weatherboard homesteads and outbuildings, while English trees and shrubs, which grew rapidly in so favourable a soil and climate, were providing fruit, shelter and ornament.

In the paddocks stumps and fallen trees were gradually removed, while post and rail replaced the primitive log fences. In 1882 the collector of statistics in the Port Sorell district reported a

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1 The traveller through Tasmania, part 26, Tasmanian Mail, 1 March 1884.
2 Ibid., part 23, T.M., 26 January 1884.
...marked improvement in the mode of cultivation. On many of the larger farms rotation of crops has been the rule, and artificial manures, guano and bone-dust largely employed throughout the district with great success.¹

There was more sophisticated machinery too; in 1881 there were only 39 horse-hoes or scarifiers in the North-West, in 1889 207, while the number of combine reapers and binders increased from 2 to 102.² Mechanisation was hampered, however, by the many stumps still in the ground; even in the relatively old-settled North Motton district, the 1889 grain harvest had to be cut mainly by hand.³

The scarcity, high cost and poor quality of farm labour was as frequent a complaint during the 1880s as it had been in previous decades. The western mining fields increased competition for labour and consequently reduced the economic attractions of clearing new land; in December 1883 J.W.N. Smith reported that

...farmers cannot get men under 20/- per week with board & lodging, the consequence is that but little new land is brought into cultivation & that there is little or no profit in agriculture.⁴

High wages encouraged mechanisation, particularly in harvesting; the cost of cutting hay, for example, made

² Statistics of Tasmania (Production), H.A.J., annually.
³ N.W.P., 7 February 1889.
⁴ V.D.L.P., O.D. 223, December 1883.
the profitability of hand-feeding fat cattle through the winter doubtful.¹ The Tasmanian government paid the passages of a limited number of immigrants from 1883 onwards² and the V.D.L. Co. imported one party of labourers the same year, but such newcomers were far too few to increase significantly the supply of labour, even if they had all been first class workmen; in fact, as with many previous Australian immigration ventures, they appear to have included a fair proportion of idlers and incompetents.³

In 1890 the upward trend of prices was quite suddenly reversed. The 1889 season had probably been the best the district had ever known and many farmers were able to pay off mortgages, settle their storekeeper's account and improve their properties;⁴ in the spring of 1889 there was 'a formidable array' of tenders for building and scrubbing,⁵ while the number

¹ Ibid., O.D. 211, 1 June 1883.
³ V.D.L.P., O.D. 213, 29 June 1883; 220 3 November 1883; 224 15 December 1883; 231 15 March 1884; The Traveller through Tasmania, part 23, Tasmanian Mail, 26 January 1884.
⁴ N.W.P., 13 June 1889.
⁵ Ibid., 8 October 1889.
of binders sold in East Devon before the next harvest was reportedly unprecedented. In 1890, however, the potato crop was a poor one, marketing was disrupted by the seamen's strike and prices fell. They continued to fall, apart from a temporary rise in 1893, for the next five years as the Australian consumer struggled with the effects of the financial depression; by August 1894 potatoes were selling at only 17s 6d to 20s 0d per ton and by August 1895 at from 15s 0d to 17s 6d, the latter a price which did not, after the cost of digging and cartage had been met, keep the farmer in food and clothing used during the production of the crop. The price of oats fell also, tending to range at rather more than 1s 6d per bushel in the Emu Bay District and rather less in Port Sorell. The West Coast market kept cattle prices up until the mining industry was partially crippled by the bank failure of 1891, but thereafter prices were forced down by impoverished markets, forced sales of cattle belonging

1 Ibid., 21 January 1890.
2 V.D.L.P., O.D. 438a, January 1891.
3 N.W.P. and W.T. commercial reports.
5 Ibid., O.D. 591, 16 August 1895.
6 N.W.P. and W.T. commercial reports.
7 V.D.L.P., O.D. 455, 28 August 1891; 471a January 1892.
to farmers foreclosed on by the banks and an intensification of the cattle import war between the Union Steamship Cos. and Huddard Parker Limited,¹ which continued despite the re-imposition of a duty of £1 10s 0d per head on cattle in 1891 and its increase to £2 in 1892.² In June 1893 the Union Company was carrying cattle from Twofold Bay to Hobart at cost or less, and prices at Hobart were little higher than in New South Wales;³ this reacted in turn on other Tasmanian cattle markets, although the North-West gained some benefit from its proximity to the West Coast miners who, if less affluent, still ate beef.⁴

The first to feel the effects of the depression were those traders and rural speculators who had overreached themselves during the years of easy credit in the later 1880s. The speed and size of the ruin which an imprudent speculator could bring upon himself is illustrated by an examination held into the affairs of Thomas Watson, of Northdown, in December 1890. Watson had begun farming only three years earlier with a capital of between £1,200 and £1,500. He had lost money and

...as he had considerable latitude in the bank of Van Diemen's Land he speculated largely in order

¹ Ibid., O.D. 489, 29 July 1892; 503 30 December 1892; 508 10 February 1893; 521 16 June 1893; 541a January 1894.
² Annual Statistics of Tasmania (Interchange), in H.A.J.
⁴ Ibid., O.D. 571a January 1895.
to retrieve heavy losses he had made. His transactions for the last two years amounted to about £60,000. He could not tell within thousands of pounds what he had lost on stock during the year.

He admitted, however, to losing £2,000 on imported sheep, £600 on his 1890 harvest and £150 each on a government road contract and on grass seed speculation; his debts then stood at £15,000 and his assets at £870.¹ Others failed equally disastrously, if on a smaller scale; a meeting of creditors of a North Motton farmer in October 1890 was told that his debts stood at £691 and his assets at £24, and a settlement of 1s 0d in the £1 was accepted.²

The warning signs of 1890 did not immediately check speculation and injudicious credit. In January 1891 Devenport traders, whether out of folly or necessity, were still giving goods to people who obviously could not pay for them and relying on Court orders to enforce small weekly payments. The North-West Post commented 'We find storekeepers here trusting labouring men who are known to have no other resources beyond their weekly wages, and letting the account run week after week....'³ The following month a visitor to the Cam river district remarked that

...if farmers paid more attention to breeding stock for themselves and less to dabbling in them

¹ N.W.P., 6 December 1890.
² Ibid., 30 October 1890.
³ Ibid., 22 January 1891.
when raised by other people...we should see fewer names of 'farmers and stock dealers' figuring in the list of bankrupts.¹

Any disbelief in the seriousness of the recession in trade and finance must, however, have been dispelled by the failure of the Van Diemen's Land Bank in August 1891. The news of the collapse of an institution reportedly doing one quarter of the business in Tasmania was received in Devonport with '...considerable excitement' but there was nothing approaching panic nor runs on other banks in the North-West. Some trading with V.D.L. notes continued at varying discounts; at East Devonport five of the Bank's £1 notes changed hands for £1.² There appeared to be a quite strong belief in the ultimate ability of the Bank to resume operations and the response in the North-West to the sale of shares in connection with the proposed merger with the National Bank was considered very satisfactory.³ The merger came, however, to nothing and the V.D.L. Bank went into liquidation.⁴ The first dividend of 4s Od in the £1 was released on 3 December 1891 and at Devonport £5,000 was paid out to depositors of the Devonport, Burnie and Waratah branches;⁵ further dividends brought the total paid to 7s Od in the £1 in June 1892⁶ and creditors

¹ Out and About, in N.W.P., 19 February 1891.
² N.W.P., 4 and 6 August 1891.
³ Ibid., 10,12 and 15 September 1891.
⁴ Ibid., 22 September 1891.
⁵ Ibid., 5 December 1891.
⁶ Ibid., 22 June 1892.
were eventually paid in full.

The failure of the V.D.L. Bank was not the disaster in the North-West that it was in Hobart, for most of the large shareholders lived in the capital. The dividends paid suggest that North-West depositors had only about £25,000 in the Bank, although the foreclosure by creditors on mortgages held by it must have caused greater distress, for the lottery of the Bank's assets opened in December 1893 included property in the North-West valued at some £70,000, being mainly farms, town land and houses in the Devonport district.¹

There was an appreciable worsening of trading conditions during the second half of 1891, the failure of the V.D.L. Bank being used by many according to the Post as an excuse not to pay their debts.² Nine of the ten bankruptcies reported by the Post during 1891 occurred during the last five months of the year, most of them being traders or builders;³ they included Harry Wood, whose shipbuilding yard had been described only a year before as 'Perhaps the largest industry at the Mersey'.⁴

In 1892 bankruptcies reached a peak. Forty were reported by the North-West Post during the year, consisting of 17 individuals or partnerships in farming,

¹ Ibid., 9 December 1893.
² Ibid., 18 August 1891.
³ Ibid., Commercial reports in each issue.
⁴ Ibid., 29 November 1890.
In retailing, five contractors, two labourers, two produce merchants, an auctioneer, an engine driver and a plasterer. There was a marked variation in the relation of liabilities to assets, the worst being in a quite hopeless state; one Latrobe butcher had assets of £160 against debts of £3,352. Several of the retailers were, however, able to meet most or all of their obligations and were probably forced into liquidation because they were pressed between falling sales and the increasing difficulty of collecting debts on one hand and the reduction of advances or credit by banks or wholesalers on the other. One Ulverstone chemist had assets of £2,681 against debts of only £663, while at Wynyard an auctioneer possessed £6,249 against debts of £6,014. In the majority of bankruptcies, however, debts considerably exceeded assets; in size the deficiencies ranged from £75 (a plasterer) to £8,100 (a Latrobe storekeeper) but most were of the order of several hundred pounds.

The following year the number of bankruptcies reported fell to 30, a probable result not only of a better harvest but also of the fact that most of those sailing closest to the wind financially had already sunk.

1 Ibid., 9 August 1892.
2 Ibid., 25 August 1892.
3 Ibid., 23 July 1892.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid., 4 October 1892.
The pattern remained much the same, as did the scale of deficiencies; 14 farmers, 8 retailers (one also a contractor) and, among the others, a sawmiller, a market gardener, a groom and a labourer. After 1893 bankruptcies were relatively few and the survivors were left to begin the task of reconstruction.

The signs of depression were most easily discernible in the towns, where bankrupts were concentrated and where the unemployed tended to congregate. A visitor to Penguin in August 1892 '...found plenty of evidence of the bad times - two or three closed stores, with the bankrupt papers idling about'. At Burnie the following December a correspondent of the Post hoped that Christmas would bring a revival '...both in trade and population. If we are disappointed, what will be our doom I dare not predict'. Some chose to leave the colony rather than face their liabilities. The same correspondent reported that '...some of our business people are off to South Africa, while others declare they must depart for the Great World's Fair', and suggested that they call a meeting of their creditors before leaving. In December 1892 a well-known Devonport resident left suddenly for one of the adjacent colonies, '...much to the chagrin of some creditors'. A sign of the times

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1 Ibid., Commercial reports in each issue.
2 Out and About, in N.W.P., 18 August 1892.
3 N.W.P., 13 December 1892.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid., 17 December 1892
also was the large number of well-insured business premises mysteriously destroyed by fire. In both 1892 and 1893 fire inquest juries added riders condemning the over-insurance of old buildings and one hotel proprietor was charged with arson; these were but a very small proportion of the highly suspicious cases.

The West Coast mining fields softened the blow of the depression for the permanent or seasonal wage labourer. The prosperity of Zeehan and the other fields encouraged a movement of business and professional men, labourers and prospectors from North-West to West which had, by 1890, become almost a rush. In January 1891, noting a temporary glut in the Zeehan labour market, the North-West Post remarked

such a result might naturally be looked for from the crowds that have been flocking westward during the last few months, over seventy having gone from Ulverstone and surrounding district alone.

The financial crisis was a severe check to the mining industry, but in April 1892 men were still making 12s 0d per day at Zeehan when they would have been glad to take 7s 6d in the North-West; by the end of 1892, however, life on the West Coast was reportedly hard and no man who could possibly find other work was advised to

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1 Ibid., 23 January 1892; 16 March 1893.
2 Ibid., 29 September 1892.
3 Ibid., 15 January 1891.
4 Ibid., 23 April 1892.
The period between the completion of the Strahan-Zeehan and Zeehan-Dundas railways in mid-1892 and the beginning of construction work by the Mt Lyell Mining and Railway Co. late in 1894 was the most difficult for those looking for work, but even so there was in February 1894 '...quite an exodus...' of labourers from the North-West to the West after the completion of the harvest. By the beginning of 1895 the Mt Lyell railway works offered employment for large numbers of men once again, although the supply of labour during that year at times exceeded the demand.

In the North-West itself work was by 1892 hard to find, at least during the slack seasons of the year. In June 1892 labour was '...very plentiful, and men will work for almost any wage...', while the following month a noticeable absence of drunkenness was attributed to lack of money on the part of would-be inebriates. In November 1892 '...the poverty at present existing even in Devonport' was pathetically illustrated by the case of an unemployed man with a starving family who attempted to kill his wife and then himself; he had lost his job in Devonport, unsuccessfully sought work in

1 Ibid., 17 December 1892.
3 N.W.P., 27 February 1894.
4 Ibid., 6 November 1894; 19 January 1895; 22 August 1895.
5 Ibid., 9 June 1892.
6 Ibid., 28 July 1892.
Melbourne and on his return walked from Circular Head to Devonport. The lot of the unemployed was made harder by a tightening of credit on the part of retailers; in July 1892 Devonport business people began the organisation of a 'no-tick' association, the object of which was to circulate the names of those who owed money to traders to prevent their gaining further credit. The consumer, however, sometimes fought back; at Ulverstone the same month the townspeople were reported to be fighting the butchers and bakers to reduce their prices and had already gained a reduction in the price of bread from 3½ to 3d.

The 1893 harvest must have temporarily increased the demand for labour, for there were no further complaints of unemployment until July of that year when there were at Devonport...a number of able-bodied workmen to be found daily on the wharves, who are unable to find employment, and in many cases painful tales are told of the privation to which their families are subjected....

The following November, however, a 'healthy revival' in the building trade at Devonport was expected to benefit '...the many skilled mechanics who have had to walk about with their hands in their pockets during the past few months'.

1 Ibid., 15 November 1892.
2 Ibid., 7 July 1892.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid., 13 July 1893.
5 Ibid., 18 November 1893.
The depression did not immediately reduce the more prudent farmer to the poverty of the 1860s and 1870s. The good seasons before 1890 had helped the smaller settlers to rise somewhat above their former hand-to-mouth existence, giving them a reserve of capital in the bank or hidden under the floorboards which was protection against creditors for at least one bad year. J.W.N. Smith was surprised how well the V.D.L. Co. tenants paid their rent in both 1891 and 1892, although by 1894 rents were very much in arrears and in 1895 'quite uncollectable'.

The western mining fields helped the farmer through the depression as much as they did the labourer. The population on the West Coast (including Waratah) rose from under 6,000 in 1891 to nearly 20,000 in 1901, yet agriculture between the Arthur River and Macquarie Harbour, discouraged by the general poverty of the soil, remained almost non-existent and the farmers of Devon and Wellington found themselves the nearest provisioners to a rapidly expanding and quite affluent industrial community. As early as 1891 a Devonport business man noted that 'The mining industry on the West Coast had given an impetus to the [North-West] Coast trade that

1 V.D.L.P., O.D. 445, 14 May 1891.
2 Ibid., O.D. 479, 6 May 1892.
3 Ibid., O.D. 556, 15 August 1894.
4 Ibid., O.D. 601, 8 November 1895.
few, save those who had something to do therewith, could realise...¹ and as the decade progressed Waratah, Zeehan and Lyell took increasing quantities of meat, dairy produce, potatoes and oats from the North-West.

Crown land sales fell between 1891 and 1895 to their lowest level since the passage of the first Waste Lands Act in 1858, only 14,316 acres being disposed of in the whole colony in 1895.² This decline was, however, only partly attributable to the depression. Other factors included the increasing remoteness and altitude of unalienated land, the reduction of government spending on development works resulting from the depression and the more stringent conditions of residence and improvement imposed on selections made on credit in 1890.³ A new Waste Lands Act of that year provided for only one system of credit payment, that of one third premium and instalments over 14 years, and demanded improvements to the value of £1 per acre to be made to the land at the rate of 2s 6d per acre per annum for a period of eight consecutive years, commencing one year after the date of selection.⁴ That settlers could still be attracted by a reasonable offer of good virgin land is shown by the sale and rapid development of

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¹ N.W.P., 7 May 1891; the speaker was John Henry.
² Statistics of Tasmania (Production), in H.A.J. annually.
³ Reports of Surveyor-General and District Surveyors, in H.A.J. annually; see especially Vol.31, 1894, Paper 80, pp.3-4.
⁴ Walch's Tasmanian Almanac, 1893, pp.123-124  
[Act 54 Vic.8].
between 2,000 and 3,000 acres of the Foster estate in the Kimberley district between 1892 and 1894.¹

Nor did the depression halt all improvement of existing farms. The increasing number of men willing to take farm work at lower wages encouraged the farmer with a reserve of capital to clear new land; in September 1891, 'Notwithstanding the dullness prevailing in agricultural matters...', a considerable amount of clearing was in progress in the Ulverstone district,² while in June 1892 farmers were urged to carry out general improvements, '...as this year 10/- will go as far as £1 usually does'.³ Many must have taken this advice, for the acreage in cultivation in the North-West rose from 96,523 acres in 1890 to 119,189 acres in 1894.⁴ Despite the tightness of money and the improvement in the supply of manual labour mechanisation increased; between 31 March 1891 and 31 March 1895 the number of combine reapers and binders in the North-West rose from 121 to 227 and that of horse-hoes, scarifiers and harrows from 301 to 769.⁵ But even with the introduction of these new machines cultivation in the North-West was regarded as rather primitive by one acquainted with

¹ N.W.P., 23 October 1894.
² Ibid., 3 September 1891.
³ Ibid., 9 June 1892.
⁴ Statistics of Tasmania (Production), in H.A.J. annually.
⁵ Ibid.
English agriculture. J.W.N. Smith of the Van Diemen's Land Company told his directors:

Practically the only tools used are ploughs, harrows, horse-hoes & rollers, the three former being made with wooden frames & the later of wood entirely excepting only iron fittings. These implements have been found more adapted to our lands, on the very great majority of which there are still some stumps remaining, than the more finished English article for the reason that they are more readily repaired - one special feature in our ploughs is that the share & land-side are always welded in one piece, loose shares are inconvenient in consequence of the frequency with which they become detached when the plough has to be drawn backwards to free it from a root or buried stump.¹

In 1891 and 1892 trials were conducted with a Hoover potato-digging machine; the results were considered quite satisfactory on ground free of roots and not too soft or weed-infested, but there was no immediate rush by North-West farmers to buy them.²

Some observers believed that the depression was not an unmitigated evil for the farmer. In March 1893 the Wellington Times noted with satisfaction that many farmers were that season growing sufficient wheat for their own domestic needs, whereas they had hitherto devoted their land solely to cash crops of oats and potatoes:

² N.W.P., 3 and 25 June 1891; 2 July 1891; 11 April 1892.
This addition of a good grist for the mill, together with the few pounds pocketed for the produce of the half-dozen cows (which, thanks to the butter factories has been more successfully accomplished) has placed our smaller farms in a better position than they have ever been...though the stoppage of public works has lessened the circulation of money and apparently created a trade depression, the so-called depression is more apparent than real in so far as it affects the farming community. Day labour at high rates of wages, or sub-contracts on roads taking up the time of farmers' sons and teams, is not farming; for the farms have suffered while outside work was undertaken, and many of our farmers were in a fair way of forgetting to farm while their minds were absorbed with speculations of other kinds....

To produce all the domestic necessities and luxuries should be the first aim of every farmer. Bread, meat, dairy produce, vegetables and fruit can be secured in abundance on any farm, sufficient for the family, with very little labor....But it has not been so hitherto. How often have our farmers gazed on their rotting heaps of potatoes - rotting for want of a market - while their wives were gazing at the bottom of a Victorian bag of flour and wondering where or when 'the good man' would get the next.\footnote{W.T., 25 March 1893.}

The most beneficial effect of the depression was, however, the encouragement given to the establishment of dairy factories by the very low crop prices of the early nineties. Many farmers had run dairies for years for home and neighbourhood milk and butter supply, but in technique these were usually very primitive. One farmer near Torquay was milking 80 cows in 1884, among them stud stock, and selling more than £1,000 of fine
cheese each year,1 but, in general, herds were small and indifferently bred. In consequence the standard of dairy produce was low; much of the butter coming into the town of Latrobe in 1892 was considered unfit for axle grease.2 Poor butter brought poor prices; in February 1891 butter was selling in the Table Cape district for the scarcely profitable price of 6d per lb.,3 while a year later producers not known to buyers could not get prices within 10 per cent of those who had established a reputation and sometimes could not sell at all.4

Farmers were encouraged to diversify their activities firstly because efficient dairying seemed likely to be profitable and secondly because the future prosperity of the potato industry was in some doubt. The potato export trade, the cash mainstay of arable farming, was threatened not only by increasing mainland self-sufficiency, perhaps linked with a protective trade policy in New South Wales, but also by evidence of a decline in the yield of crops in the North-West. The latter appears to have caused most concern, for a fall in standards not only reduced the return per acre cultivated, but also threatened the supremacy of the

1 The Traveller through Tasmania, part 21, Tasmanian Mail, 12 January 1884.
2 T.O. Mann at butter factory meeting, Latrobe, N.W.P., 26 March 1892.
3 N.W.P., 19 February 1891.
4 Ibid., 23 February 1892.
Tasmanian potato in the Sydney market over the Victorian and New Zealand product. The yield in the North-West as a whole for the period 1890-1893 tended to be from ten to twenty per cent less than that of the preceding five years, but high yields from newly-cleared land may have obscured a sharper decline on the older farms, where the effects of over-use of the same seed and soil were beginning to be felt. Farmers were by 1889 using '...a considerable amount...' of bonedust and guano, but some reported that guano, unless repeatedly applied, left the land even weaker than before and that bonedust harmed the potatoes. The crop suffered also from the intermittent ravages of the potato grub, caterpillar and blight.

Tasmanian exports were also prejudiced by the tendency of at least a minority of farmers to include damaged or undersized potatoes in bags which might also be weighted with a generous complement of earth and stones. Such malpractices were almost certainly of long standing, but attention was drawn to them by the strength of competition in the Sydney market, especially at a time when very low wheat prices might encourage the consumer to eat more bread and fewer potatoes. A meeting

1 Calculated from Statistics of Tasmania (Production), in H.A.J.
2 N.W.P., 11 September 1890; 29 September 1892.
3 Ibid., 29 August 1889.
4 Ibid., 7 February 1888; 11 September 1890; 19 and 30 March 1895.
at Ulverstone in 1891 called to discuss the best means of checking the marketing of inferior potatoes from other parts of Tasmania as produce of the North-West turned into a discussion of the deficiencies of the district's own crop. One speaker claimed that Tasmanian potatoes were then fetching 10/- per ton less than New Zealand, although this was almost certainly exceptional.¹

To establish the need for diversification in a community quick to grumble but often slow to positive action is not, however, sufficient to explain its accomplishment. The more forward-looking of those interested in the North-West had long been urging farmers to plant sugar-beet, flax, vines and orchards and to combine to erect dairy and starch factories, but with little success. In 1892, however, the appointment by the Tasmanian government of a Council of Agriculture provided a more positive force for farm improvement. The Council, consisting of 11 members chosen to represent the main branches of arable and pastoral farming, was a purely advisory body intended to receive, discuss and disseminate new ideas and new techniques. Contact with farmers was maintained by local Branch Boards of Agriculture of which 28 were set up in Tasmania during the first year of the Council's operation. Seven of the new boards were in the North-West and during the first few months of their existence they heard papers on topics ranging from 'Spraying fruit trees' to 'Rust in wheat' and 'Origin of the method of the prevention of frost by smoke'. By April 1893 the North-West boards

¹ Ibid., 21 April 1891.
had 148 members who had attended at least one meeting, although, as in many other rural organisations, the most active part in the proceedings tended to be taken by a relatively small group of progressive farmers, together with a few business and professional men.¹

The Council's early ventures were not always successful, the response to the distribution of sugar-beet seed in the North-West in 1894 being discouraging,² but in dairying it achieved most satisfactory results. In 1892 a Travelling Dairy was set up to make a tour of instruction of the colony under the management of James McCormack who had had charge of a similar venture in Queensland. The Dairy's visit to the North-West, made between October 1892 and February 1893, was a notable success. At Latrobe '...very considerable interest...' was shown by the farmers and by April 1893 one of the pupils from the town was '...extensively engaged in the manufacture of cheese, a considerable quantity of which he exports to other colonies'. At Burnie the interest shown was '...of the highest possible character, the farmers coming into the town at great personal inconvenience to witness the process of cheese- and butter-making'.³ At Barrington an '...enthusiastic gathering' assembled to farewell the dairy after its stay in the district subscribed over

² N.W.P., 18 September 1894; 20 November 1894.
200 shares paid up to 10s 0d within ten minutes towards the construction of a creamery. 1

The Travelling Dairy not only taught farmers to make good butter and cheese at home, but also aroused interest in the dairy industry as a whole at a time when the success of co-operative factories in Victoria was becoming apparent. 2 The influence of Victoria seems to have been dominant in the establishment of the first dairy factory in the North-West, at Wynyard, early in 1892. The prime movers in the formation of the company, which had a capital of £3,000, were the manager of the local branch of the Bank of Australasia and C.B.M. Fenton, who was a prosperous local farmer and also one of the two Wellington M.H.A.'s. Fenton had visited the 'Pioneer' butter factory at Cobden, in Victoria, and a man trained there was engaged to supervise the erection and operation of the Wynyard establishment. 3 The factory opened in September 1892 4 and proved an immediate success, suppliers being attracted in particular by the regular monthly income which their milk cheque provided. 5

1 N.W.P., 21 March 1893.
2 Ibid., 21 July 1891.
4 N.W.P., 29 September 1892.
5 Ibid., 15 December 1892.
During the first six months of operation nearly 100,000 gallons of milk were treated and at the end of that period a ten per cent dividend was declared. Shareholders would have received even more but for the requirement that any surplus after a ten per cent dividend had been paid must be returned to the milk suppliers; accordingly the farmers were paid a bonus of 1d. per gallon, adding £103 to the £1,323 already paid out in monthly settlements. 1

During 1893 three more milk factories were established at Sheffield, Ulverstone and Burnie. 2 The success of the Travelling Dairy must have been a factor in their flotation, but at least two of the three had been under consideration before the Dairy's visit and the Victorian influence was still strong; the directors of the Burnie factory, for example, went to Victoria to study the industry there. 3 The new ventures made it clear, however, that the establishment of a profitable dairy factory was neither as simple nor as inexpensive as some had supposed. The biggest problem was lack of capital. The chairman of directors of the Ulverstone company, in suggesting that the government make loans to dairy factories, remarked that

In nearly every case the factories had started without sufficient capital and had to borrow from the banks at a high rate of interest,

1 Ibid., 11 March 1893.
2 W.T., 24 January 1893; N.W.P., 14 October 1893; 7 December 1893.
3 V.D.L.P., O.D. 546, 13 April 1894.
once started and the object secured, the public held off, the farmers wanting their money to buy cows and the investor has little to invest.\(^1\)

It was not sufficient to raise some £3,000 to £4,000 to enable a small factory and outlying creameries to be built and rudimentarily equipped. Neither the Ulverstone nor the Burnie factory could raise sufficient capital to run its machinery, as planned, by water power and both had to use more expensive power provided by steam engines, in the case of the Burnie factory a hired one.\(^2\) The lack of cool storage was also a difficulty, the Sheffield factory having to send its butter to Melbourne to be frozen.\(^3\) The formation of a company to build cool stores at Devonport was considered, but progressed no further than the inevitable (and unsuccessful) appeal for government assistance.\(^4\) The Burnie factory, brought to the verge of bankruptcy in April 1894 by a shortage of ready cash, was unable to afford the purchase of cheese-making equipment; yet if it had been able to do so it could have substantially increased its income by making only sufficient butter to sell in the most profitable markets, turning the remainder of milk supplied into cheese.\(^5\)

\(^1\) N.W.P., 6 February 1894.

\(^2\) Ibid., 13 March 1894; V.D.L.P., O.D. 512, 11 March 1893; O.D. 546, 13 April 1894.

\(^3\) N.W.P., 4 December 1894.

\(^4\) Ibid., 22 January 1895.

\(^5\) V.D.L.P., O.D. 546, 13 April 1894.
Unreliable milk supplies also hindered the factories. Some doubts were cast on the efficiency of methods of milk testing, but there appears to have been no general criticism of the standard of milk delivered. The volume of supplies, however, fluctuated considerably and in the case of the Burnie and Sheffield factories at least sometimes reached uneconomically low levels. Too many farmers, in order to save the cost of fodder, left their cows in winter to find what natural feed they could, so reducing milk output that the factories had either to close or work at reduced capacity for several months of the year. Thus, although winter was the most profitable season of the year to sell butter, the pattern of milk supplies, the absence of cool storage and the lack of working capital which necessitated the immediate sale of butter to pay for milk deliveries, forced the factories to produce and market most of their output in the summer. Even in summer some farmers would not take their milk to the factory if they felt they could not spare the time to cart it, or if the current factory price was not sufficiently attractive. The Burnie factory was, in April 1894, paying 3d per gallon for milk because a reduction to 2½d would so reduce supplies as to force it to close; a milk price of 3d, however, resulted in

1 Ibid., O.D. 509, 25 February 1893.
2 N.W.P., 17 July 1894; W.T., 26 October 1893.
3 N.W.P., 11 January 1894; 24 September 1895; V.D.L.P., O.D. 575, 8 March 1895.
a loss on export butter shipments, while at home a shareholder who was also a trader had to assist the factory by purchasing large quantities of butter at \( \frac{1}{2} \)d per lb. more than the prevailing price of 10d.\(^1\)

The dairy factories were, in fact, launched and sustained only by a relatively small group of businessmen and progressive farmers, and they could count on the support of the majority of farmers only when it appeared to be in the latter's immediate interest to render it; but for the low crop prices of the factories early years industrial dairying might never have been established. The root of the problem was the fact that the farmer could survive without the dairy factory, whereas the latter could not survive without the farmer; thus a company might refuse to erect a district creamery if satisfactory guarantees of milk supply were not forthcoming, but such a refusal hurt the factory at least as much as it did the farmer.

Markets for factory dairy products were found more readily than were adequate supplies of milk and capital. The Tasmanian market, particularly that of the western mining fields, was the most profitable and the factories sought vigorously to sell here.\(^2\) A considerable quantity was sent also to London, although this was a market less remunerative and more difficult of access, refrigerated shipping space being difficult to find; in January 1894 Tasmanian butter was being left

\(^1\) N.W.P., 3 April 1894.

\(^2\) Ibid., 24 September 1895.
on the wharf in Melbourne because the Victorian Department of Agriculture had engaged all the available shipping space.\(^1\)

The Sheffield factory was still struggling with shortage of capital and milk in 1895\(^2\) and eventually succumbed, but the other ventures were by then fairly well established; in the 1894-95 season the four factories purchased between them more than one million gallons of milk.\(^3\) The abysmal low to which crop prices fell in 1894 and 1895 encouraged farmers to turn to dairying; as one Kentishbury settler pointed out, potatoes at from 12s 0d to 20s 0d per ton and wheat at from 2s 3d to 3s 0d per bushel would not pay, but milk at 2\(\frac{1}{2}\) per gallon in summer and 3\(\frac{1}{2}\) in winter would pay very well.\(^4\) Similarly a Mt Hicks farmer claimed that milk was the only farm activity which paid in the 1894-95 season.\(^5\) By 1895 one Castra farmer considered that the best way of using 50 acres was to plant ten acres of potatoes for cash sale, ten acres of oats and five acres of roots and greenstuff to provide winter stock feed and to keep the remaining 25 acres for ten or twelve cows; the cows, being fed and hence yielding

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1. Ibid., 20 January 1894.
2. Ibid., 1 October 1895.
3. Ibid., 24 and 26 September 1895; 1 October 1895; Cyclopaedia of Tasmania (Hobart, 1900), Vol.2, p.366.
4. N.W.P., 1 September 1894.
5. Ibid., 30 March 1895.
milk through the winter, should provide £50 per annum in milk, while the cash sale of oats and potatoes might lift the return to £100.\(^1\) Thus the small settler began to engage in what was really mixed farming as opposed to the running of a few cattle as a sideline to growing root and grain crops.

\(^1\) Ibid., 18 July 1895.
CHAPTER 4

TRADITION AND INNOVATION: 1895-1910

The agricultural depression was at its worst in 1895,

A year during which produce of every description has realized a price beneath that of cost of production, the result being that farmers are heavily in debt both to Landlords & Storekeepers & unless there be a marked increase in the value of produce during the current year many of our best farmers, who have struggled bravely on year after year, must succumb. Those of less determination, or lower commercial morality have in many instances sought relief through the bankruptcy court.¹

Many settlers had exhausted the reserves left over from the good seasons of the late 1880s and the signs of depression became ever more apparent, with the neglect of buildings and fences and the sale of young stock not yet fully grown to pay debts.² In the Pine Road district, where the price of 12s 6d per ton for potatoes left the farmer with 1s 6d after cartage and digging had been paid, one settler lamented 'My children have to go barefoot because I cannot buy boots, while we are woefully short of many other necessaries';³ the North-West Post spoke of the 'starvation' prices being

¹ V.D.L.P., O.D. 610a, January 1896.
² Ibid.
³ N.W.P., 15 June 1895.
paid for potatoes.¹

Yet recovery was swift, partly through the misfortunes of others. As the terrible drought of the late 1890s gradually crippled Mainland agriculture so markets improved for the Tasmanian farmer and prices rose.

Table of prices - 1896-1902²

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<th>Potatoes</th>
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<th>Wheat</th>
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<td>1/7</td>
<td>4/2</td>
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<td>1/11 - 2/-</td>
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<td>25/- - 26/6</td>
<td>1/1 - 1/5</td>
<td>2/- - 2/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>37/6 - 40/-</td>
<td>1/9 - 2/2</td>
<td>2/5 - 2/6</td>
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<td>90/- - 92/6</td>
<td>2/6 - 3/-</td>
<td>3/9 - 3/10</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Quotations: Potatoes (per ton) July 1st; oats and wheat (per bushel) April 30th.

The North-West benefited largely also from the West Coast market, where mining and railway building reached a peak in the decade after 1895; in 1898 Wellington farmers were able to sell 'anything that looks like beef'.³ The cavalry and transport horses of the Boer

¹ Ibid., 12 November 1895.
² Ibid., commercial reports.
War too provided a substantial, if temporary, market for Tasmanian oats.¹

Farmers appear to have recovered from the depression quite quickly. The profits of the 1896 season enabled most of those in the Burnie area to clear their accumulated debts,² although at Penguin many were still behind in payments and required another good season to meet their obligations in full.³ The restoration of farms to full efficiency took longer; in January 1897

...farmers generally are free of debt but have a liability facing them for repairs to buildings & fences, & for restocking their farms, while the very fact of their having been forced to sell their young stock in former years makes it more difficult for them to recover their position, as part of their source of income is lost.⁴

Re-stocking was hampered by the high price and scarcity of cattle in the North-West, a symptom of the varacious appetites of the western miners and railway builders,⁵ but such was the prosperity brought by the long Mainland

¹ Statistics of Tasmania (Interchange), in H.A.J.
² V.D.L.P., unnumbered O.D., January 1897, following O.D. 645, 29 January 1897.
³ N.W.P., 21 May 1896.
⁴ V.D.L.P., unnumbered O.D., January 1897, op.cit.
drought that the 1901-2 season, the last before the
drought broke, was 'unquestionably the most prosperous
ever experienced in Tasmania'.

One legacy of the depression was a renewal of interest in one of the most constant of all the farmer's grievances. This was the apparently excessive difference between the price he received for his produce and that which the consumer paid for it after it had passed through the hands successively of Tasmanian merchant, shipping company and Mainland dealer. Some farmers shipped crops to Sydney to be sold on their own account, but this seemed merely to multiply the army of commission agents who made sure that any advantage benefited them rather than the producer. In 1897 one farmer who consigned potatoes to a Sydney agent for sale at an unreserved price recounted his experience as a warning to others: the agent sold the potatoes to a retailer for £2 15s 0d per ton, the latter passed them on for £3 to another agent, who in turn sold them to a wholesaler for £3 5s 0d; the last-named disposed of them in the country at a good profit. The tendency of farmers to rush their produce into the market when prices were high often caused the grower additional loss, values being liable to sudden falls. The system

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1 N.W.P., 17 June 1902.
2 Ibid., 12 November 1895.
3 Ibid., 4 September 1897.
4 Ibid., 25 April 1896.
of marketing lacked, indeed, any impartial regulation and the producer, being less able to take care of himself than the trader, generally got the worst of it.

The remedy urged upon farmers was co-operative marketing, whereby shipments could be made in bulk to one mainland agent who, in consideration of the large volume of produce guaranteed to him, would lower his handling charges; one hopeful predicted that an agent so favoured would charge only 2½ per cent for commission, whereas farmers were then (1894) paying an estimated five per cent for commission and 12 per cent for merchants' profit.¹

The first co-operative in the North-West began trading at Ulverstone in 1889, both buying produce and selling goods through a general store; despite early complaints of lack of support from shareholders² it proved a success and by 1899 was operating on a capital of £5,000 in £5 shares.³ No other attempt to launch a co-operative was, however, made for several years, in contrast to the establishment of dairy factories, where the first successful venture was quickly imitated; this inactivity was probably due in large measure to marketing co-operatives being against the interests of the most active entrepreneurs in North-West, the merchants.

¹ Ibid., 28 June 1894.
² Ibid., 17 February 1891.
³ Cyclopaedia of Tasmania (Hobart, 1900), Vol.2, p.276.
The farmers were, as so often, slow to do anything more constructive than grumble; the organiser of meagrely-attended meeting at Green's Creek in 1896 to discuss co-operative sales remarked that '...the system of disposing of farm produce by the growers in Tasmania had always been most unsatisfactory...', the 1895 season, for example, having been marked by frequent fluctuations and disastrous falls in prices, particularly for potatoes. Yet nothing was done to improve it:

At the close of every season a few suggestions, with occasional letters, appeared in the local papers, proposing an alteration in the ruinous method of quitting the produce, and a few efforts had been made to remedy matters, but up to the present they had proved useless, and the unfortunate producer continued at the mercy of a horde of agents who controlled the markets at the selling end with ruinous effect to the interest of the producer.

Farmers were advised to combine to consign all produce by chartered ship to one reliable selling agent in Sydney, arrangements being made with the banks for advances on shipping notes for freight, bags etc., so that those requiring cash immediately could get it, while the balance would be remitted by the selling agent. Agents in the various centres were to advise on the state of the market, in order to avoid over-supply, while at home surveys of the extent and progress of crops would inform farmers when and how much produce to forward. Arrangements would be made to use any surplus within the district, so that the market would not be spoiled by dumping. Bags would be branded with the name of the grower as well as that of the co-operative, so
that the origin of inferior produce could be detected.¹

The general downward trend of prices between 1890 and 1895 after the prosperity of the later 1880s appears to have at last impelled farmers into co-operative action. As a group they were much stronger in number and resources than in the long, almost hopeless, depression of the 1860s and 1870s, and they had thus both the ability and, having now known the joys of prosperity, the incentive to act. Even so it was sometimes difficult to maintain any constant support for a scheme; a meeting at Cam in January 1896 took up £104 of the requisite £150 worth of shares to start a local co-operative,² but two months later a rise in crop prices had caused interest in it to lapse.³

In December 1896 John Gibson, a well-to-do Don farmer, canvassed sufficient support from a series of meetings in the Devonport and Sheffield districts to allow the North-Western Farmers Association to be formed and begin trading at Devonport the following February.⁴ The new co-operative was fortunate in being established early in series of good years and at first it prospered. In the 1897 season over £29,000 was paid out to farmers on produce received, the Association having, according to the directors, outstripped all competitors; an appeal

¹ N.W.P., 7 January 1896.
² Ibid., 23 January 1896.
³ Ibid., 10 March 1896.
⁴ Ibid., 12, 19, 22 and 29 December 1896; 9 and 30 January 1897.
to the 235 shareholders to increase the paid-up capital from 900 to 1,200 £1 shares resulted in 156 additional shares being taken up immediately. The Association achieved a notable success in inducing the James Paterson line of steamers to run between the North-West and Mainland ports, breaking the collusive monopoly of those already in the trade and saving farmers an estimated £6,000 in freights in 1897. The business of the N.W.F.A. reached a peak in 1902, when almost £60,000 worth of produce was sold and the 384 shareholders received, on a paid-up capital of £2,718, a 7\(\frac{1}{2}\) per cent dividend and 2\(\frac{1}{2}\) per cent bonus; thereafter, however, poorer seasons and mismanagement sufficient to bring the former manager to trial caused the sudden collapse of the Association in 1905.

The end of the N.W.F.A. left only one marketing co-operative in the North-West, the Ulverstone venture having been purchased by its manager in 1899. The survivor, the Burnie-based Tasmanian Farmers Co-Operative Association, progressed fairly under careful management, although hindered by lack of capital; in 1905 the directors found it impracticable to try to open up new and more profitable produce.

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1 Ibid., 27 November 1897.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., 15 August 1905; 20 October 1906.
4 Ibid., 12 December 1899.
markets '…seeing that farmers had only subscribed a working capital of £904.\(^1\) In 1903 the Association began retail sales, establishing a reputation for quality and cheapness that other Burnie storekeepers found difficult to outsell.\(^2\)

Co-operatives therefore handled at least temporarily a considerable volume of trade through the two main ports and, in spite of the unfortunate end of the Devonport venture, they must be considered a success. That the system failed to be more widely adopted, and that the existing associations tended to be dominated by the same quite small group of progressive, relatively wealthy, farmers, business and professional men so prominent in all moves for rural improvement is a measure of the almost fatalistic passivity of the majority of farmers. If the boom which ended in 1902 had been followed by several seasons of sharp depression more co-operatives might have been established, but prices were, on the whole, sufficient if not to satisfy the producer at least to encourage him to invest his surplus capital in farm improvements. There were still complaints of the iniquities of merchants although the farmer was not always the aggrieved party; one Sydney merchant ventured to point out that taking 20 lbs of earth in each sack of potatoes

\(^1\) Ibid., 29 August 1905; Advocate, 19 September 1914.
\(^2\) V.D.L.P., O.D. 88, 10 October 1904; copies of the annual reports of the Tasmanian Farmers' Co-Operative Association, Ltd., 1898-1909, kindly supplied by Mr Wardlaw, the present manager.
was a rather dear way of buying Tasmanian land. In 1905 the North-West Post was sufficiently sure of its readers' views to seek to increase its popularity by a rather emotional crusade against price fixing, but in general good seasons seemed to discourage attempts to reorganize trading; only 15 people attended a meeting held at Burnie in 1905 to consider providing against gluts in the potato market.

Competition among the Sydney steamers was short-lived. The coming of the Paterson boats in 1897 reduced the Devonport-Sydney freight rate to 5s 0d per ton, but by 1900 it had risen to 9s 0d, Paterson too having found that collusion was more profitable than competition. In 1903 another newcomer, the Melbourne Steamship Company, brought the rate back to 5s 0d, but once again agreements were made and prices rose. In addition the North-West and Western Tasmania coastal trade was shared out between William Holyman and the Union Steam Ship Company to avoid competition.

By 1899 free selection had been in progress in the North-West for more than 40 years. For much of that

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1 N.W.P., 7 October 1902.
2 Ibid., 13, 16 and 20 May 1905.
3 Ibid., 21 March 1905.
4 Ibid., 31 December 1901; 18 September 1907; Advocate, 19 September 1914; Agricultural Gazette, October 1907, p.237.
time crop markets had been depressed and it might therefore be expected that many small farmers on holdings of 160 acres or less would have been forced to sell out to wealthier men who could afford to buy, clear and stock several hundred acres for the more profitable occupation of beef-raising. The Wellington Times had noted in 1893 that:

the only successful treatment our Crown lands is now being subjected to, is the very opposite of small holdings; and with very few exceptions it is the larger selectors only who are doing any good - men who have a little capital to expend. Their plan is to scrub and grass the land for stock, in comparatively large blocks, at the least possible expense per acre - to get grass on it and gradually get rid of the timber by fire and natural decay, without further labor, until it can be made ploughable at little cost. During the last half-dozen years considerable areas on this Coast have been so treated. The grazing period has generally been fairly profitable, and the occupants are now entering on the time to fence in paddocks for potatoes and a subsequent rotation of crops. The smaller selectors, on the other hand, who have taken up their 50 or 100 acres with no other capital than their daily labor, have not in the aggregate made headway. They get grass on a portion of their holdings, but not sufficient to bring in a return of any consequence by the sale of stock. They leave their grass for seed which the caterpillars mostly get; the patch of potatoes brings in but little revenue, and the result is, generally, a return to day work, while the clearing soon gets overrun with a second growth of scrub. These selectors have not all abandoned their lots; the land in many instances is being scrubbed a second time, and eventually permanent homes will be established. But this protracted period before a home can be made does not meet the necessities of the unemployed [against the settlement of whom on the land the editorial was directed].

1 W.T., 27 May 1893.
Yet, if it was difficult for a man of small capital to establish himself on the land, an example from the 1899 valuation roll suggests that there were still very many small freeholders in the North-West. In the parish of Kentishbury, the settlement of which had begun immediately after the passage of the Waste Lands Act of 1858, 20,410 acres had been taken up in lots of 20 or more acres by 1899, this area being divided into 218 lots owned by 155 people. Apart from the Foster estate (11 lots totalling 1,127 acres), a remnant of the land granted to the defunct Mersey and Deloraine Tramway Company, only one person owned more than 500 acres in the parish and he (a resident of Devonport) had but 591 acres in five lots. The great majority of lots were of 160 acres or less and occupied by an owner who lived in the parish and who had at the most only one other lot.

**Land tenure in Kentishbury by lots, 1899**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acreage of lot</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20 - 50</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 - 100</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101 - 160</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>161 - 320</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Lots owned and occupied by a resident (the same) of the parish.

2. Lots leased by a resident from another resident.

---

3. Lots leased by a resident from a non-resident.
4. Lots neither owned nor occupied by a resident.
5. Lots unoccupied.

Total holdings by residents of Kentishbury, 1899

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acreage*</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20 - 50</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 - 100</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101 - 160</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>161 - 320</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Total acreage owned and leased in the parish by each resident.

1. Residents owning all the land they occupied.
2. Residents owning half, or more than half, of the land they occupied.
3. Residents owning less than half of the land they occupied.
4. Residents leasing all the land they occupied.

The 1899 valuation roll gave evidence, too, of how many of the original settlers or their families were still in the parish. Of the 49 surnames of occupiers of land residing in the parish listed in the 1868 valuation, 33 were found on the roll of 1899, almost all of them being names sufficiently uncommon to make it highly probable that they belonged to the same family in the latter year as in the former.¹

¹Ibid., Hobart Town Gazette, 10 March 1868, pp.406-8.
The people of the North-West voted overwhelmingly for federation, but if they did so in the hope that free trade would allow them to sell largely in Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia they must have been disappointed. At least between 1901 and 1903, after which export statistics ceased to distinguish between the various colonies, the Sydney market remained of crucial importance:

**Potato exports (tons)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N.S.W.</th>
<th>Vic.</th>
<th>Q'ld.</th>
<th>S.A.</th>
<th>W.A.</th>
<th>Total*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>33,666</td>
<td>16,077</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>49,861</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>58,431</td>
<td>8,315</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>970</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>68,154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>77,260</td>
<td>6,918</td>
<td>3,925</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>1,530</td>
<td>89,761</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The total includes various small overseas shipments.

**Oats exports (bushels)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N.S.W.</th>
<th>Vic.</th>
<th>Q'ld.</th>
<th>S.A.</th>
<th>W.A.</th>
<th>Total*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>164,405</td>
<td>146,789</td>
<td>4,980</td>
<td>82,680</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>589,902</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>746,583</td>
<td>151,170</td>
<td>6,929</td>
<td>2,500</td>
<td>1,601</td>
<td>972,839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>661,460</td>
<td>110,175</td>
<td>2,988</td>
<td>401</td>
<td>2,523</td>
<td>777,547</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The total includes various small overseas shipments.

The end of the Mainland drought in 1902 saw the re-appearance of the familiar pattern of substantial annual price fluctuations governed by the yield of

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1 Statistics of Tasmania, Interchange (Export), in H.A.J.
Mainland and New Zealand crops. In spite of Australia's ever-growing population the threat of glut was still present, particularly in the potato market. In 1904 crops were good but prices so low that farmers fed potatoes to their cattle and:

...even in cases where the crops were exceptionally good the prices realised have left under the best circumstances not more than 7/6 per ton for potatoes, after paying for digging 6/- to 8/- per ton bags 6/- per ton and cartage 2/6 to 5/- per ton. Some tenants [of the V.D.L. Co.] with potatoes classed as 'off colours' have not realised even the cost of digging and marketing.

In 1907 crops were good and prices low, in 1908 crops were bad and prices high.

Nevertheless the first decade of the twentieth century was, on the whole, a good one for the farmer, at least until the ravages of caterpillar and Irish potato blight in 1909 and 1910. Prices were sometimes low, but they also rose to heights unknown since the days of the Victorian gold rushes; potatoes, for example, were selling for £9 10s 0d per ton at the end of the 1905 season.

1 V.D.L.P., O.D. 73, 27 June 1904.
2 Ibid., O.D. 74, 4 July 1904.
3 Ibid., O.D. 304, 31 January 1908.
5 Ibid., O.D. 158, 5 February 1906.
Table of prices - 1903-1910

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Potatoes</th>
<th>Oats</th>
<th>Wheats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1903</td>
<td>40/- - 45/-</td>
<td>2/4 - 3/-</td>
<td>5/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>22/6 - 26/-</td>
<td>1/6 - 1/7½</td>
<td>2/6 - 3/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>87/6 - 95/-</td>
<td>1/9 - 2/-</td>
<td>3/- - 3/4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>132/6 - 150/-</td>
<td>2/6 - 2/7</td>
<td>3/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907</td>
<td>35/-</td>
<td>1/11 - 2/6½</td>
<td>n.q.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>75/- - 80/-</td>
<td>2/10½ - 2/11½</td>
<td>n.q.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>95/- - 100/-</td>
<td>2/3</td>
<td>n.q.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>140/- - 150/-</td>
<td>2/- - 2/1</td>
<td>n.q.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Quotations: Potatoes (per ton) July 1st; oats and wheat (per bushel) April 30th.

n.q.: No quotation given.

Even one bad season could still, however, cause the under-capitalised or improvident serious difficulties. Many still spent rather than saved the profits of good years; the V.D.L. Co. attributed the difficulty of collecting rents in 1904 to the fact that 'Farmers in this district seem to buy on credit without limit and most recklessly'. Similarly in May 1907:

The good prices of the last two years should have enabled farmers to provide against a bad season but money seems to be very scarce. Some of the tenants spent their surplus on improvements and these deserve consideration to some extent but others are poor now through improvidence in good seasons.

1 N.W.P., commercial reports in next issue after date of quotation.
2 V.D.L.P., O.D. 74, 4 July 1904.
3 Ibid., O.D. 235, 6 May 1907.
The landlord was in particular troubled by '...an idea amongst some [tenants] that it is the correct thing to pay everyone else before the [Van Diemen's Land] Company, and that the rent does not matter'. He could sue for rent, but

Potato growers as a rule...have no stock or effects of any value on which we can distrain and where their intentions are honest I cannot well take from them what is absolutely necessary for putting in next year's crop.1

The acreage in grass for beef and dairy cattle continue to increase between 1900 and 1910 relatively more rapidly than did that in crop:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1900-02</th>
<th>1910-12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Permanent artificial grass</td>
<td>126,717 acres</td>
<td>223,197 acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land in crop of which:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oats</td>
<td>54,711</td>
<td>75,078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes</td>
<td>18,397</td>
<td>27,317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>16,766</td>
<td>15,115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pease</td>
<td>5,166</td>
<td>3,116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle: dairy</td>
<td>2,520</td>
<td>6,828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9,687 no.</td>
<td>16,578 no.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27,660</td>
<td>38,727</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep</td>
<td>51,968</td>
<td>60,276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pigs</td>
<td>16,000</td>
<td>20,095</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1 Ibid., O.D. 74, 4 July 1904.
2 Three year averages calculated from Statistics of Tasmania (Production), in H.A.J.
The inclination of many farmers to graze rather than crop their land was due in part to transport difficulties. Between 1890 and 1910 road and railway construction in the North-West fell behind the generally rapid extension of settlement, government spending being checked first by the depression and then by the haze of confusion and pessimism in which Tasmanian politicians immersed themselves over the financial consequences of federation. The coastal railway was extended from Ulverstone to Burnie in 1901, but despite meetings, petitions, debates and enquiries the government could not be persuaded to build branch lines inland from the coastal ports.

The ministerial view, which was supported by official enquiries, was that goods traffic would be confined too much to one season to make profitable the construction of branch lines on the prevailing Tasmanian standards of 3' 6" gauge, one in forty ruling grade and curves of at least five chains radius. The Tasmanian government had already pioneered, in the Zeehan mining district, the construction of very narrow (2' 0" gauge) light railways for public traffic, and its example was followed in Victorian agricultural districts. In such lines, however, cheapness of

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construction had to be measured against the disadvantages of a gauge differing from that of the main railway system; if, as in the North-West, the narrow gauge line could carry produce direct from farm to port the cost of trans-shipment from narrow to broad gauge was avoided, but even so the cost per route mile of rolling stock and other equipment was much higher for a short, isolated line than for a large system, particularly if seasonal traffic peaks left wagons idle for much of the year. It is thus hardly surprising that a government concerned with financial problems and impressed with the hopeless unprofitability of several of the lines built during the railway extravaganza of the late 1880s should be unwilling to build either branch lines or light railways. An act of 1907 empowered municipalities to borrow money for the construction of such lines, but it failed to encourage any local enterprise; quite apart from the cost, districts without railways were, as they indignantly pointed out, being treated unfairly by comparison with those through which government lines had already been built. Eventually the government shouldered the burden and between 1914 and 1924 a series of branch lines of 3' 6" gauge were opened in the North-West, only to gradually succumb to the competition of the motor lorry.

In the absence of local railways the farmer remote from a port or the coastal railway had to concentrate on grazing. It was usually considered unprofitable to grow potatoes or grain unless at least one trip by cart from farm to destination and return could be made within a day. The day might be a very long one, from
dawn until after dark, but a carter was unlikely to make a round trip of much more than 30 miles and steep hills or bad roads could cause it to be considerably less.¹ In general, therefore, cultivation gave place to beef-raising and home dairying on land more than about 15 miles from a port or railway station; in the Wilmot district, 20 miles inland, only 400 of some 8,400 acres cleared were in crop in 1902.² At Upper Castra:

Farmers have to cart their stuff sixteen miles to market, and get up at 4 a.m. to enable them to do the thirty-two miles in the one day. Nietta [some six miles further inland] ... has every acre of land taken up, but there are only, perhaps, three or four settlers living in the whole of the parish. If a tramway were constructed the land would double in value, and more people would settle there....³

Even within the 15-mile radius there were difficulties. Carting was too seasonal for many to take it up as a permanent occupation and in good years there was keen competition for the services of those who did; one Kentish carrier remarked in 1902 that he had had to put off a lot or carting that season, it being almost a favour for settlers to have their potatoes carted.⁴ Many farmers were forced to cart their own produce, an occupation wasteful of time badly

¹ Ibid., passim.
² Ibid., p.7.
³ N.W.P., 10 October 1907.
needed at harvest, even if it did save paying £1 or £1 5s 0d per day for the services of bullocks, dray and driver.  

The innovation of the decade in land transport was the steam traction engine. These had long been in use for driving and moving stone-crushers, threshing machines and sawmills, but about 1905 more powerful engines began to be widely used for hauling produce; by October 1906 about 30 engines were working between Deloraine and Devonport alone and the number was increasing each year.  

These ponderous monsters alarmed not only passing horses but also the road trusts whose territory they traversed; their tendencies in particular to stop on weak bridges while taking on water and to pull over to the soft edges of a road while avoiding other traffic seemed likely to make already inadequate roads quite impassable. The trusts considered excessive the loads of 15 tons or more which each engine hauled in two or three trailers, while the carriers argued with at least equal justice that they did no more harm than would a similar tonnage moved by bullock teams and that they were merely being made the scapegoat for the trustees' failure to keep their roads in order.  

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1 Ibid., p.13; a horse team cost rather less: see pp.13, 49 and 50.
2 N.W.P., 3 October 1906.
3 Ibid., 3 April 1906.
4 Ibid., 27 March 1906.
5 Ibid., 10 May 1907.
6 Ibid., 14 January 1907.
The trusts, however, prevailed, parliament sanctioning a bill in 1907 which limited an engine to two trailers, each carrying no more than six tons in summer and five in winter; as winter was the potato-carting season the latter was the effective limit. Nevertheless the traction engine, steam lorry and, towards 1910, the motor lorry, continued to supplant the horse or bullock team, reflecting not only the progress of technology but also the healthy financial position of the farmers who, singly or in partnership, purchased them.

Sea transport too had its problems. The cheaper freights and faster delivery offered by the larger steamers, which called only at the two deep water ports, encouraged traders to send their produce by rail or coaster to Burnie or Devonport for transhipment. Where goods could be moved by the coastal railway there was usually no serious delay, although heavy traffic might result in congested wharves and a shortage of railway wagons. In the country to the west of the Cam river, however, the largest area of new settlement in the North-West between 1900 and 1910, the absence of a coastal railway and consequent need to lighter produce from the small ports of Wynyard and Cam to Burnie was keenly felt:

The trouble at present with potatoes, is the handling and re-handling. You have to cart them to Wynyard, stack them there, then they are lightered to Burnie or Devonport. There

1 Edward VII no.30; N.W.P., 5 November 1907.
2 N.W.P., 6 and 10 May 1902.
is not only the cost, but the articles are damaged, and you sometimes cannot get them away. Perhaps they will lay there for a fortnight.¹

It was therefore fortunate for the more remote districts that the years following federation were generally profitable ones for the sale both of fat cattle and dairy produce, although it was impossible for the farmer to avoid all cultivation because the destruction of grass by the underground grub required the periodic ploughing and cropping of pasture.² The opening of the Emu Bay Railway gave graziers a reliable and relatively swift link with Zeehan, Dundas and Strahan in 1900 and Lyell in 1901³ and the West Coast consumed all the beef that the North-West could produce for it; in consequence live cattle prices remained on the whole at least satisfactory despite the unrestricted import of meat into Tasmania after federation.⁴

Fat sheep production increased but slowly, Tasmania being unable to supply even her own mutton needs after federation.⁵ In the North-West the farmer's disinclination to raise sheep was probably in part the result of ignorance:

² Wilmot railway commission, op.cit., p.3.
⁴ V.D.L.P., O.D., passim.
⁵ Statistics of Tasmania (Interchange), in H.A.J.
At the present time, when a farmer starts to keep sheep, he generally goes to a sale, and picks up the first lot he can see that appears to be cheap....This want of care often leads to farmers failing to make sheep-keeping pay....

The V.D.L. Co. found sheep profitable, but a campaign by stock dealers in 1904 to encourage farmers to rear fat lambs met with little response; one grazier sent 350 three-month old lambs by rail to a Launceston freezing works, but most seem to have regarded cattle as a more tempting investment.

Despite a steady increase in production between 1900 and 1910 dairy farmers continued to find a profitable market for all the milk that they could produce. Tasmania was still unable to supply her own needs in dairy produce and the value of butter, cheese and lard imported ranged as high as £87,324 in 1909, although imports were partly counterbalanced by high-quality exports to the Mainland and United Kingdom. Between January and June 1906, for example, movements in and out of Tasmania consisted of:

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1 N.W.P., 24 June 1899.
3 N.W.P., 20 December 1904.
4 Statistics of Tasmania (Interchange), in H.A.J.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Imports</th>
<th></th>
<th>Exports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Weight</td>
<td>Value</td>
<td>Weight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butter</td>
<td>805,937 lbs</td>
<td>£35,400</td>
<td>241,105 lbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheese</td>
<td>68,796 &quot;</td>
<td>£ 1,778</td>
<td>92,307 &quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tasmanian butter had by 1905 gained an enviable reputation in Mainland markets, although it was:

...high time that the grading and branding of our exported butter was done in Tasmania, instead of allowing the best of our produce to be absorbed and exported by the other States.²

The local market was still, however, regarded as the best and factories sought to sell as much as they could in it.³ In 1905 the Table Cape factory, although satisfied with the sale of its first class butter in Britain at from 97s 0d to 101s 0d per cwt., disposed of its output thus:

- Tasmania: 268,311 lbs
- London: 68,423 "
- Melbourne: 43,456 "

The best Tasmanian butter brought higher prices than Mainland imports,⁵ although movements from the North-West

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4. N.W.P., 1 August 1905.
to markets in the south of the island were hampered by high rail freights, which gave the advantage to cheap steamer shipments from the Mainland. The West Coast was, however, a large and profitable market.

The progress of dairying was reflected in the opening of four new factories at Wilmot in 1904, Burnie (second) in 1905, Burnie (third) in 1907 and Yolla in 1906; three were locally-financed co-operatives, the other, the 1905 Burnie factory, being a branch of a Launceston company. The pioneer Burnie and Table Cape factories also increased output and improved equipment, the latter installing a modern refrigeration plant in 1905 and building a new factory in 1910. The success of the factories was due partly to better means of milk collection; instead of farmers

\[\text{Report of Council of Agriculture for 1905-6, op.cit., p.3.}\]
\[\text{N.W.P., 20 February 1908.}\]
\[\text{Ibid., 13 October 1904.}\]
\[\text{N.W.P., 27 September 1907.}\]
\[\text{Ibid., 8 November 1906.}\]
\[\text{Report of Council of Agriculture for 1904-5, op.cit.}\]
\[\text{Ibid.}\]
having to take their milk to a district creamery for separation, they were now encouraged to build home separators whence the factories' own carts would collect the cream. Thus supplies could no longer fall off because farmers were too busy to take their milk to the creamery; by 1905 separation on the farm was almost universal, its only disadvantage being the difficulty of testing the quality of milk now that it no longer passed through a small number of creameries.\(^1\) Some home butter and cheese making continued in the more remote districts, cheese, which kept longer, being particularly favoured.\(^2\)

Despite the increase in the number of dairy cattle and, in consequence, in the supply of skim milk, pig-keeping remained of fairly minor importance, since most farmers believed that there was little room for expansion in the Tasmanian bacon market and that prices on the Mainland and overseas were too low to justify exports.\(^3\) But some found that well-bred animals raised on skim milk, meal and pollard were a profitable investment,\(^4\) for, as the Wellington Times pointed out

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1 Report of Council of Agriculture for 1904-5, op.cit., p.3.
2 Wilmot railway commission, op.cit., passim, in particular p.7.
3 W.T., 28 March 1895; 9 April 1895.
Every householder knows that during several months of the year it is impossible to purchase good bacon at any price, and at other times when there is a plentitude of what is called bacon, the greater part of the article offered for sale is unfit to eat - or unpalatable, perhaps, we should say - and in most cases it is simply dry salt pork, not forgetting the salt.

The editor went on to argue that, although the local market might be limited, an export trade in pork and bacon could be developed:

It is said on all sides that the export business will not pay. Perhaps it will not 'pay' in the sense we have all been accustomed to use this word for years past in the Colonies. But if prices for all kinds of farm produce continue low, as there is every prospect of such being the case, 1½d. to 2d. per lb for carcase pork will be better for a farmer than not being able to sell his pigs at all; and up to a limited number - say, one pig, or one and a half to each cow - a dairy farmer can grow pigs at a profit at almost any price he can get for them. It was said three years ago that 9d per lb. in England for factory butter would not pay; but our dairymen have to make it 'pay', and in the majority of cases are glad to get even this price. It is, however, by no means certain that first class bacon cannot be exported to England and sold at good prices.¹

The first bacon factory in the North-West, opened at Ulverstone in 1891, proved very successful² and Co-operative factories were opened at Burnie and

¹ W.T., 2 April 1895.
² N.W.P., 3 March 1894; W.T., 2 March 1895.
Wynyard in 1895, although that at Burnie was closed in 1903. Nevertheless there was little increase in the number of pigs in the district, there being an annual average of 18,087 in 1890-92, 16,000 in 1900-02 and 20,095 in 1910-12.

Dairying was essentially the preserve of the small farmer who could manage a herd with the assistance only of his family. Under such circumstances it was profitable, but if all labour had to be paid for it was not:

...paid milkers will do little but milk, whereas the small farmer does most of the milking in person & with his family, there is no lost time, as the farmer & sons occupy the interim between morning & evening milking profitably on the land, & if an assistant be kept he has to do likewise.

J.W.N. Smith estimated that the establishment of a dairy herd of 60 head by the V.D.L. Co. would result in a substantial working loss. Capital costs would amount to:

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1 W.T., 12 March 1895; 18 and 20 April 1895; 28 May 1895; 6 June 1895.
2 Advocate, 30 November 1903.
3 Calculated from Statistics of Tasmania (Production), in H.A.J.
Cow and calf byres \((2 @ £175)\) \(£ 350\)
Mens' cottages \((3 @ £100)\) \(£ 300\)
Cows \((60 @ £7)\) \(£ 420\)
Horse, cart and harness \(£ 50\)
Dairy utensils \(£ 25\)

\[ £1,145 \]

The working expenses for one season would be:

- Grazing 60 cows \((52 \text{ weeks} @ 1s 6d)\) \(£240.0.0\)
- Milking \((5 \text{ men} \times 26 \text{ weeks} @ 35s 0d)\) \(£227.10.0\)
- Horse, cart and harness \((26 \text{ weeks} @ 15s 0d)\) \(£ 19.10.0\)
- Dairy utensils depreciation \(£ 12.10.0\)
- Insurance on buildings \((@ 5/8 \text{ of one per cent})\) \(£ 4.1.3\)
- Interest on buildings \((@ 10 \text{ per cent})\) \(£ 65.0.0\)
- Interest on, and provision for loss of, cows \(£ 42.0.0\)

\[ £610.11.3 \]

In return, revenue would be:

- Milk - fresh \((32,760 \text{ gallons} @ 3d)\) \(£409.10.0\)
- " - skim \((29,484 \text{ "} @ \frac{1}{2}d)\) \(£ 61.8.6\)
- Calves \((60 @ 10s 0d)\) \(£ 30.0.0\)

\[ £500.18.6 \]

There would thus be a working loss on one season of £109.12s 9d. \(^1\)

The small farmers were themselves often reluctant to give up cultivation; at Upper Castra in 1908 many farmers are under the impression that the only thing to bring in the sovereigns is the

\(^1\) V.D.L.P., O.D. 756, 17 February 1900.
uncertain redskin, which is up to £5 one year and down to 30s. the next.1

During the great Mainland drought, when crop prices were high, so many farmers abandoned dairying for cultivation that the Kentish milk factory had to close.2 Even those who did decide to concentrate on dairying had difficulties to overcome:

Farmers - tenant farmers in particular - cannot turn at a day's notice from potato growing to successful dairying. If they had the money to purchase cows they cannot find the cows to purchase. All cows not actually in calf or being milked find their way at once into the hands of graziers for fattening and it would take years before cows could be found sufficient to turn the whole district into a dairying district. And then it will take time to instruct owners or tenants of 40 acre or 50 acre holdings how to make dairying pay on these small areas. The present method of trusting entirely to English grasses which dry off during the summer months would not much more than provide a family with bare food for 12 months without any question of rent and other expenses.3

Failure to provide adequate fodder in hay or root crops was one of the most costly deficiencies of Tasmanian dairy farming techniques; in the 1907 season the falling-off of milk supplies through lack of pasture at a time when butter prices were high caused farmers 'immense' loss of income.4 It was not, however,

1 N.W.P., 25 February 1908.
2 Ibid., 15 November 1898.
3 V.D.L.P., O.D. 403, 16 August 1909.
the only deficiency and in 1900 the government appointed a full-time dairy instructor, Augustus Conlon, to teach farmers better methods through lectures and practical demonstrations.¹

Conlon's task was not easy, for every new idea had to overcome a formidable combination of ignorance, prejudice and, perhaps above all, mental laziness. The traditional contempt of the theorist was still in evidence. One correspondent of the North-West Post wrote after the failure of the Kentish butter factory:

...one of those useless objects employed by the Government, called a dairy expert, persuaded the people that it would benefit the district to have a butter factory. The district erected one with their own money...but when they saw that it would pay them better to close it and produce other lines, like a wise people they did so.²

Whether the people of Kentish regretted their wisdom once the breaking of the Mainland drought had caused crop prices to fall is not recorded, but such prejudice seemed to be the rule rather than the exception. The general feeling of a meeting of the West Devon Agricultural Society in 1905 when discussing a forthcoming visit by Conlon, was reported to be that he could teach them nothing they did not know already; the remark that '...while they could get the cream away they did not want an expert'³ is typical of the farmer's

² N.W.P., 18 September 1902.
³ Ibid., 25 February 1905.
indifference to any innovation not of obvious and immediate financial benefit. Conlon was sometimes compelled to seek the respect of his audience by emphasising that he was a practical man, not just a bookman, who had worked his way up from the bottom and was not afraid to take his coat off.¹

Nevertheless, the dairy instructor persevered with lectures, demonstrations and from 1909 onwards annual residential classes on a farm near Devonport.² The factories rather than the farmers were the first to voluntarily seek his advice, but by 1908 he was able to record:

...the now thoroughly awakened interest of the dairyman in the importance of a better understanding of the more technical branches of his own industry. This is fully evidenced by the increased number of applications for information on subjects which were treated with absolute indifference only a few years ago.³

and in 1910

...the increased amount of attention which has been given by dairymen generally to the erection of improved buildings, more particularly milking-sheds and cow-stalls. This tendency to rise to a higher plane has also been very noticeable in the information sought and supplied during the year on all subjects connected with

¹ Ibid., 30 August 1902.
improved methods in the equipment of dairies and factories, the manufacture of butter and cheese, ensilage - making, testing of dairy herds and allied subjects.¹

Conlon's work must have encouraged an interest evident among farmers to better the quality of their dairy herds. There was certainly room for improvement. A survey of milk yields in West Devon in 1900 suggested that of 3,000 cows less than 500 would appreciably exceed the supposed minimum economic yield of 130 lbs of butter per cow per annum, while a large proportion would give less than 80 lbs.² The introduction of new stock was hindered not only by the six month pleuro-pneumonia quarantine imposed on all cattle brought into Tasmania,³ but also, as a member of the East Wellington Branch Board of Agriculture pointed out, by the fact that:

it did not pay the private individual to import high class stock for the simple reason that the ordinary farmer was averse to paying 5s. for the service of a bull when he could, by running his cows on the road, get the services of a scrubber for nothing.⁴

By 1908, however

...when purchasing dairy heifers or cows, the progressive man no longer trusts to points in the selection of suitable animals, but requires

² N.W.P., 14 June 1900.
³ Ibid., 13 November 1905.
⁴ Agricultural Gazette, July 1900, p.12.
more solid evidence based on reliable information being given on the breeding of the sire and the milking qualifications of the dam. Unfortunately such information is practically unobtainable here as yet.1

The government showed some interest also in the improvement of arable farming, although its work might have seemed of lesser importance but for the almost complete default of private enterprise; there were occasional individual experiments as, for example, in growing new varieties of wheat,2 but the agricultural societies, supposedly formed to encourage improvement, contented themselves merely with organising annual shows.3

The Council of Agriculture continued to investigate new crops and new methods, although hindered by lack of funds. In 1903:

The amount of money (£800) voted for contingencies for this year, after providing for the travelling expenses of officers, meetings of Council, printing Agricultural Gazette, and other sundry expenses... leaves but little margin for the work of initiating a system of experimental plots, publishing bulletins or the importation of seeds etc.4

The post-federation financial scare, the failure of the Council to immediately transform Tasmanian agriculture

2 N.W.P., 7 January 1899; 9 March 1899.
3 Ibid., 15 May 1900.
and internal squabbles over the relative powers of government and farmers\(^1\) combined to make it an obvious target for the advocates of retrenchment. By 1909:

Interest in the work of the Branch Boards on the part of the farming community has lessened to a considerable degree during the past year.\(...) The repeated announcements by past Governments that it was their intention to abolish the Council has resulted in the collapse of several branches\(...) Any excuse is seized upon by farmers to explain their non-attendance at Branch Board meetings\(...\)\(^2\)

The functions of the Council were gradually transferred to the new Department of Agriculture, making possible the continued employment of an agricultural expert, H.J. Colbourn, who found much to occupy his attention. Analyses of soil from Railton and other points made in 1902 showed that the failure to plough farm-yard manure or green crops into land long cultivated made it deficient in plant food, besides being unable to retain moisture.\(^3\) In 1907 a Mainland expert was surprised that, despite the natural fertility of the soil, the average potato yield in the North-West was only about four tons per acre; this he attributed to insufficient care in selecting seed.\(^4\) Even where artificial manures were used their effectiveness was

\(^1\) N.W.P., 24 June 1902.


\(^3\) Ibid., Vol.49, 1903, Paper 33, p.5.

\(^4\) N.W.P., 27 December 1907.
lessened by their poor quality or application in ignorance to soils to which they were chemically unsuited. In 1900 two farmers reported that there was little or no difference in the yield of land which had been treated with bonedust and guano and that which had not, while in the second annual West Devon potato-growing competition in 1901 the first eleven places went to plots which had had no manure.

Colbourn worked for improvement through lectures, contributions to the *Agricultural Gazette* and tests under the Manures Adulteration Act and, in spite of the difficulty of communicating with farmers who knew nothing of science or scientific terminology, he must have been partly responsible for a great increase in the use of manures, particularly superphosphate of lime, between 1900 and 1910.

Nevertheless the ravages of potato blight in 1909 showed that many farmers still cared little for science

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1. Ibid., 21 June 1900.
2. Ibid., 11 May 1901.
3. In June 1905 Colbourn found that 22 of the 27 brands of phosphate and bonedust on sale at Devonport and Ulverstone were over-priced, 1 ¼ of them being sold at more than ten per cent over their real value; one bonedust which he estimated was worth £4 15s 6d per ton was being sold for £6. *Agricultural Gazette*, August 1905, p.178.
and bore out A.K. McGaw's belief that:

The potato growers on this Coast are the most careless imaginable. Any cheap method of cultivation, or any cheap seed that can be obtained is unfortunately good enough for a large proportion....

The disease, called brown rust until identified as the dreaded Irish blight, severely damaged crops in the North-West in 1909 and to a lesser extent in 1910, causing New South Wales to ban temporarily the import of Tasmanian potatoes. Colbourn attributed the spread of blight to the use of superphosphate of lime to keep up the yield of crops grown year after year on the same ground; the fertiliser induced rapid growth, making the outside skin of the potato tender and hence more susceptible to disease. The only sure remedy was crop rotation, which would starve potato parasites out of the ground during years in which other crops were grown, provided that care was taken to remove all old potatoes before a new crop was sown. A few progressives bought machines to spray the crops with a Bordeaux mixture, but many remained sceptical:

Only a very small proportion of potato growers have sprayed their crops and as a consequence blight has appeared on a number of farms....

1 V.D.L.P., O.D. 401, 9 August 1909.
2 Ibid., O.D. 405, 30 August 1909.
3 Ibid., O.D. 403, 16 August 1909; O.D. 426, 22 November 1909.
so many good practical farmers will not be persuaded to try spraying. They think they know all that will ever be known about potato growing and resent any interference with their old-fashioned methods.¹

Suspicion on new methods was equalled by suspicion of new crops. In 1904 the Council of Agriculture imported linseed from Victoria, offering to sell farmers sufficient to grow one acre of flax, and also arranged for a Victorian flax-grower to visit Tasmania to show farmers how to grow and treat the crop. In spite, however, of the desire of a Victorian factory to purchase unlimited quantities of flax very few farmers in the North-West showed any interest in the crop; in the Burnie area the V.D.L. Co. were unable to induce any of their tenants to take up the Council's offer.²

By 1910 the alienation of Crown land suitable for agriculture in the North-West was almost complete; only in some of the more remote parishes south of Table Cape, notably Preolenna and Parrawe, was any substantial selection still to take place.³ Elsewhere the farmers were as close to the mountains as soil and climate would allow, occasionally, indeed, too close, as settlers in

¹ Ibid., O.D. 440, 31 January 1910.
the Vale of Belvoir, some 35 miles inland on a tributary of the Forth, found to their cost.\(^1\) The years following federation had seen land sales in Devon and Wellington reach almost boom proportions, peaks being reached of 19,643 acres in the former county in 1905 and 35,396 acres in the latter in 1904.\(^2\) The keen demand for land and increasing remoteness of that still unalienated caused private sales to bring ever higher prices. By 1905 farms near the coast were selling for as much as £27 10s 0d per acre,\(^3\) while two years later it was difficult to get a farm at North Motton, five miles inland, for less than £20 per acre;\(^4\) between 1903 and 1909 values in the Emu Bay district rose by an average of 60 per cent.\(^5\)

The demand for land was due essentially to the prevailing prosperity of agriculture and in particular of dairying and beef cattle raising, but certain other factors helped on increase it. As before many of the purchasers were local farmers or their sons,\(^6\) but now drought and land hunger caused Mainlanders also to take an interest in Tasmania. In October 1902 J.L. Dow, agricultural editor of The Leader and a former Victorian

\(^1\) V.D.L.P., O.D. 124, 12 June 1905.
\(^2\) Statistics of Tasmania (Production), in H.A.J.
\(^3\) N.W.P., 6 June 1905.
\(^4\) Ibid., 5 July 1907.
\(^6\) A Trip to Riana, in N.W.P., 1 February 1898.
cabinet minister expressed himself 'wonderfully impressed' with the quality of land in the North-West which, if in Victoria, could have sold for £40 or £45 per acre.¹ Some Victorians had already come to the North-West² and during the next few years many more settlers arrived from the Mainland.³ Gippslanders were attracted in particular, being experienced in clearing heavy timber, and they tended to be the most successful; other Mainlanders were regarded by some as '...too much fine weather men...' for the forest lands.⁴ Towards 1910 a decline in mining aroused considerable interest in settlement in the North-West among the people of the West Coast, many of whom had also come from Victoria.⁵

John Matthews was one example of a Victorian who came to Tasmania. Born in Cornwall and brought up at Myrtleford, in the Ovens valley, he worked as a young man on the Mundaaring-Kalgoorlie pipe line, tried his hand at gold-mining and then went to New Zealand for three years. He applied for a grant of land there and while awaiting the result returned to Victoria for a holiday; at the Melbourne Cup, however, he met an old school friend who had already selected land in the Trowutta district of the Far North-West and, with his brother, he decided to settle there also.⁶

¹ N.W.P., 7 October 1902.
² Ibid., 26 September 1901.
³ Agricultural Gazette, March 1903; July 1903, p.163.
⁵ Ibid., O.D.162, 12 March 1906; Advocate, 17 February 1968, p.17.
⁶ Advocate, 17 February 1968, p.17.
Chance alone must have brought other settlers to Tasmania also, for little appeared to be known on the Mainland of the quality of forest land still open for selection. Even when a would-be settler did come to the North-West it was difficult for him to find land:

A seeker arriving at Devonport or Burnie is lost as soon as he steps ashore and 'lost' a second time in the scrub. Chance guides him into whose hands he falls; land agents are legion, but reliable bush-guides few.¹

Many purchased privately because of the difficulty of getting to, or even hearing of, areas of good crown land:

The information required for the use of immigrants was not easy to get, as the usual plan here when a man required land was to spend a few days looking for a suitable block, so there had been no systematic exploration of the back country, or if there had been, it was by individuals who would no doubt require to be paid for their knowledge. The Government should open main lines of road into the back country, and the land would quickly be selected.²

The district surveyors furnished annually rather general reports of land still available in each parish, but their main concern was the survey of land already applied for.

If more difficult to find, crown land became increasingly easier of purchase. Recognising that much of the land still unalienated was too poor or too remote to bring £1 per acre, the government in 1895 reduced the minimum auction upset of land regarded as

¹ Agricultural Gazette, March 1903.
² Report from Flowerdale Branch Board of Agriculture, Agricultural Gazette, July 1903.
second class to 10s 0d per acre,\(^1\) and in 1900 that of third class to 5s 0d;\(^2\) purchases under these concessions were not extensive in the North-West, but they did dispose of some pockets of poorer land. In 1903, however, private purchasers were allowed to select up to 500 acres of second class land at 10s 0d or 1,000 acres of third class at 5s 0d\(^3\) and a rush of applications followed; two years later the maximum areas were reduced to 250 acres and 500 acres respectively.\(^4\)

The terms of credit sales were also altered. The Crown Lands Act of 1890 maintained the system of one-third premium and payments over 14 years, the purchaser being required to make improvements to the value of 2s 6d per acre per annum from the second to the ninth year.\(^5\) In 1894, however, the difficulties in which the depression had placed many selectors prompted the government to allow bona fide settlers either to (a) postpone payment of any instalment for up to five years, provided that five per cent per annum interest was paid thereon or (b) retain only the acreage to which the instalments which they had already paid entitled them, provided that this was at least one half of the

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1 59 Victoria No.13, section 4; see also Walchs' Tasmanian Almanac for an annual summary of land legislation.
2 Crown Lands Amendment Act, 1900 (63 Victoria No.21).
3 Crown Lands Act, 1903 (3 Edward VII No.39).
4 Crown Lands Act, 1905 (5 Edward VII No.31).
5 54 Victoria No.8.
area of the original selection. The following year the second option was extended to those who were able to purchase less than half of their land.¹

In 1895 an attempt was made to help the would-be settler of very limited means by offering adults who had not previously selected land a maximum of 50 acres each at £1 per acre. Buyers on credit had to pay a premium of one third, but in return the only payment required in the first three years was a deposit of 2d per acre; thereafter 10d per acre per annum was paid in years four to six and 2s 0d in years seven to eighteen. The purchaser was required either to live on the property throughout the period of payment or to carry out improvements other than buildings to the value of £1 per acre.² This offer too attracted a considerable number of applications for land in Devon and Wellington.³

The rush for land during the first few years of the new century was the swan song of the free selector of small capital. There was little land left for the pioneer at the long-sacred price of £1 per acre and the would-be farmer must purchase an improved property at ever-increasing cost. This was further encouragement

² Crown Lands Amendment Act (58 Victoria No.13).
³ Annual reports of Devon and Wellington county surveyors in report of Surveyor-General, H.A.J.
to the drift of rural youth to the cities, 'one of the greatest problems of the day'. The Director of Agriculture suggested, perhaps naively, that life in the country be made more interesting by turning the languishing Branch Boards of Agriculture into a species of rural mechanics institutes, to give the farmer and his family the opportunity not only of improving their education but also of meeting socially other people. A more realistic scheme to keep the poorer youth in the country was, however, closer settlement.

The passage of the Closer Settlement Act in 1906 empowered a government-appointed board to purchase private estates suitable for subdivision into small holdings. The Legislative Council, ever the champion of private property, refused to sanction a compulsory purchase clause in the act, so that the Board was compelled to take whatever land it could get at whatever price the owner chose to ask. Farms were offered to approved settlers on 99-year leases, the tenant having the option of purchase after ten years; rent and sale price varied with the quality of the land. The settler could borrow from the Board a sum equal to his own capital, provided that this did not exceed one fifth of the capital value of the farm.

The Board purchased five private estates between 1907 and 1909 and also took up an area of crown land at

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2 Ibid.
Forester in the North-East. A select committee found, however, that some of the purchases had been ill-advised both as to price and to the suitability of the land for small holdings; the criticism had some justification, although the committee, dominated by conservatives, was obviously biased against closer settlement in general and suggestions of compulsory purchase of private land in particular.¹

A more valid criticism, made both by committee members and witnesses, was that many of the farms were uneconomically small. Those interested in closer settlement saw it as a means of checking the movement of young men from Tasmania, and in particular from the stagnating West Coast mining fields. This presented special problems as W.N. Boutflower pointed out to the Devonport Branch Board of Agriculture:

...how many of the young men now annually leaving Tasmania are in a position of having acquired farms of even thirty acres? Probably not one in ten....They have not the capital to buy and stock even a small farm, and, very probably, not the experience to work it at a profit. The Government offers them uncleared land at fairly reasonable rates, but the conditions of residence, coupled with the necessity of having to work for wages, for part of the year at least, render the offer nugatory.²

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² N.W.P., 18 June 1906.
That some miners wanted to go onto the land is shown by the applications received for lots on the Cheshunt closer settlement estate near Deloraine:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local</th>
<th>29</th>
<th>North-West</th>
<th>5</th>
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<tr>
<td>West Coast</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>North-East</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>South</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central North</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>New Zealand</td>
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One scheme suggested in the North-West was that the government purchase and manage an estate on which the worker would, in addition to being paid wages, take up shares of perhaps £25 each. The Closer Settlement Board preferred, however, to give every man the chance of owning a farm, no matter how small, and in consequence the Isandula estate, south of Ulverstone, included farms of as little as 35 acres. Unfortunately the Board failed to foresee that any man with so little capital as to be interested in a 35-acre farm would be quite unable to be resident on the land, as required, within a year; until the land was in crop he must spend much of his time working for others and hence must live near a place of permanent employment. Isandula aroused the interest of many, including timber-mill workers and an overseer, while several other young men from Ulverstone who had been planning to go to Queensland decided to stay at home until the estate was opened up. Very few, however.

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1 Report of select committee on closer settlement, op.cit., p.3.
2 N.W.P., 18 June 1906.
3 Ibid., 26 November 1908.
actually took up land and in 1910 further purchases by the Closer Settlement Board were halted pending the Legislative Council's acceptance of compulsory resumption.

In 1910 the Scottish Agricultural Commission the Australia toured the North-West. Its members were impressed with the rich soil and the abundant crops which it yielded, and they marvelled at the energy which had been devoted to winning the land from the forest:

The early settlers must have been faced with tremendous difficulties. The whole land was heavily timbered, some of the trees exceeding 200 feet in height and some having a girth of over 60 feet. The roads could never be made either straight or level, having of necessity to wind for interminable lengths round rough hill sides, down through deep ravines, and over elevated ridges. To recall these conditions and to look on these districts now with their well cultivated lands and with their farmhouses thickly spread over them at the rate of about one to every hundred acres, compels a feeling of real respect for the hardy axemen who first faced the privations of settlement here.

If the Commissioners had known more of Australian history they might have added that here was a vindication of the hopes of those who had fought for legislation to open the lands to an industrious yeomanry. In the conclusion to this thesis I shall attempt to summarise the reason for the successful establishment of a community of small freeholders in North-West Tasmania.

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2 Australia; Its land, conditions and prospects, being the report of the Scottish Agricultural Commission, Edinburgh, 1911.
CHAPTER 5

THE POLITICS OF APATHY: 1856-1890

If the advocates of free selection had expected the yeoman farmer to raise the standard of Tasmanian political life, they must surely have been disappointed. Few of the forest land settlers can have had any previous political experience and, but for the inescapable fact that the government alone could give them the money they so badly needed for roads, bridges and harbours, they might well have ignored the comic-opera parliament in Hobart Town, with its succession of financial crises, 'scenes', and undignified scrambles for office. As it was, political activity in the North-West during the 1860s was confined to brief, often poorly-supported, election campaigns and occasional displays of more general interest when a financial measure particularly concerning the district was before parliament. The Examiner's Leven correspondent reported in 1862: 'The forthcoming election does not seem to create much excitement...the prevailing impression with people here appears to be that we are over-governed already....'\(^1\) The wishes of the electorate were simple to comprehend, if not to implement. More public works were essential in the North-West, but they must be paid for not by increased taxation, but by retrenchment in other parts of the colony, in particular among the idle civil servants and

\(^1\) L.E., 17 June 1862.
pensioners of Hobart Town. Thus a candidate had to convince the voters that he could spend more while spending less, and if he hoped for re-election he must continually walk a tightrope of equivocation.

Between the establishment of responsible government in 1856 and the redistribution of 1871 the North- and Far North-West shared a House of Assembly electorate, Devon, which extended west from Badger Head to Cape Grim; in the Legislative Council they merely formed part of the Meander seat. Voters were few; in 1870 there were 4,467 males aged 20 or over in Devon,¹ but only 803 names on the Assembly roll.² This was due partly to the restricted franchise, for labourers and some of the poor farmers did not possess the required property of £100 capital value or pay an annual house rent of at least £10.³ Many others, however, might have registered but for indifference or confusion over their eligibility; in 1866 only 380 of some 1,200 to 1,500 who were believed to be eligible were enrolled in Devon.⁴

Both the candidates and their more active supporters came from the ranks of 'gentlemen' rather than of 'yeomen' in the 1860s. James Gibson, the first to hold

² H.A.J., Vol.19, 1870, Appendix A, Table V.
⁴ L.E., 2 November 1866.
Devon, was the colonial manager of the Van Diemen's Land Company and on his retirement in 1859\(^1\) The Torquay Central Electioneering and Registration Committee, composed of merchants and a few of the larger landholders, invited Sir Richard Dry to succeed him.\(^2\) Dry refused, and the committee's choice fell on another wealthy, non-resident pastoralist, William Archer,\(^3\) who was elected without the inconvenience of having to visit Devon.\(^4\)

A year later the dissolution of the Assembly saw Archer opposed by yet another absentee pastoralist, Edward Dumaresq. Little excitement was expected of the campaign: 'unless the people take more interest than is usually manifested, it will be a mere private chat between a few friends, and the matter will end in his [Archer's] safe return'.\(^5\) Dumaresq succeeded, however, in arousing the electorate by supporting continued state subsidies to the churches, a dangerous platform for a district with a strong Non-conformist element. A minion distributed hand-bills:

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1. Ibid., 29 October 1859.
2. Ibid., 22 October 1859.
3. Ibid., 7 February 1860.
4. Ibid., 15 May 1860.
5. Ibid., 25 May 1861.
Opponents branded Dumaresq an 'antiquarian Tory'\textsuperscript{2} whose recommendation to the good opinions of the electors is his bishopism, his partiality for State pay plunder, and his letter of approbation and condolence to Mr Horne, the late judge, when proceedings against him were under discussion by the Legislature.\textsuperscript{3}

Archer opposed state aid to religion and promised more public works in the new settlements financed by a combination of income tax and customs duties; he was elected by 127 votes to 50.\textsuperscript{4}

Archer himself retired through ill-health within a year\textsuperscript{5} and Devon was again contested by two non-residents.

\textsuperscript{1} Ibid., 22 June 1861.
\textsuperscript{2} Ibid., 30 May 1861.
\textsuperscript{3} Ibid., 16 May 1861. Thomas Horne's election to the Legislative Council while a Judge of the Supreme Court was the subject of a long controversy both within and without parliament; see F.C. Green ed., op.cit., p.279.
\textsuperscript{4} \textit{L.E.}, 20 June 1861.
\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., 3 April 1862.
Francis Allison, the inevitable estate-owner from the central North, addressed the farmers as man to man:

As an agriculturist I may say that we are not represented in the House. My sympathies, gentlemen, are with you....

Gentlemen, - Knowing no other home, and having a large family, I am one of you.

His policy was a masterpiece of equivocation. Government spending was to be reduced, yet 'reproductive' works would be carried out to develop the colony; he opposed state aid to the churches, but if it must be it should be equitable; he disliked pensions, but those already granted must be honoured.¹

The second candidate was John Davies, editor of the Hobart Town Mercury, who pointed out that Allison had no more connection with Devon than he did himself.² Davies too trafficked in 'vague generalities',³ but he had the recommendation of having formerly been a notably independent member for Hobart Town,⁴ whereas Allison carried for some the stigma of the political career of his brother, 'an obstinate, unreasoning, self-serving obstruction'.⁵ Allison had the support of such large absentee landlords as John Bennett, Thomas Field and Cornelius Casey,⁶ but Davies won the election by 133 votes

¹ Ibid., 24 May 1862.
² Ibid.
³ Ibid.
⁴ Ibid., 22 May 1862.
⁵ Ibid., 5 June 1862.
⁶ Ibid., 22 May 1862.
to 119. Allison's undoing may have been his conservatism, and in particular his failure to come out strongly against state aid to churches, but Davies' popularity was probably increased by the liberality with which free beer flowed during his campaign.2

Davies held Devon until 1871; his only challenger in the intervening years was Thomas Field in 1866, whom he easily defeated in a campaign in which each sought to out-retrench the other.3 Davies enjoyed the general approval of his electors for several years, because he supported more public works and more liberal land laws, although his visits to Devon were infrequent; in 1864 he promised that he would in future visit the electorate at least once a year.5 In 1869, however, he was injudicious enough to favour government assistance for the Tasmanian Main Line Railway, which was to parallel the main road from Hobart to Launceston. The people of the North-West regarded the railway, with some justice, as an extravagance and an insult to districts to which the Legislative Council consistently denied even the beginnings of an adequate road system; the Midland members of the Council had long preached the virtues, moral and financial, of local responsibility for public works, yet they were quick to deny their principles

1 Ibid., 3 July 1862.
2 Ibid., 17 June 1862.
3 Ibid., 2 November 1866.
4 Ibid., 19, 22 and 26 November 1866.
5 Ibid., 7 May 1864.
when a railway of benefit to their own districts was proposed.\(^1\) Thus Davies would have been in trouble enough with his electors had he not added insult to injury by proposing that the North-West be rated at Is. in £1 on the annual value of property to improve the main road from Deloraine to Circular Head. The proposal was unanimously rejected by a public meeting and 'great indignation' expressed at Davies' conduct;\(^2\) at the next election (for the new seat of East Devon), he was defeated by 187 votes to 42.\(^3\) The retiring member, however, wasted little time mourning Devon, for he contested and won the southern seat of Franklin less than a fortnight later.\(^4\)

The Main Line Railway affair fanned into something approaching fury a long-smouldering discontent with the Tasmanian parliament in the North-West. Beset by an agricultural depression which seemed to grow yearly worse, they saw a succession of inept ministries squandering the money they wanted for roads on one extravagance after the other; even when some scheme of benefit to the forest lands was approved by the lower house it was sure to be rejected by the upper. The organiser of a meeting at Cam in October 1871 spoke of the 'extreme' taxation to which the settlers were subjected; if it were required:

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\(^1\) Ibid., 29 August 1868; 19 September 1871.
\(^2\) Ibid., 20 September 1870.
\(^3\) Ibid., 16 September 1871.
\(^4\) Ibid., 30 September 1871.
for absolute necessaries, such as roads to our back settlements and reproductive works, there would be less to say; but no, they squander it away in extravagant salaries, from the Governor downwards...the people in Hobart Town were quite ignorant about us and our position and requirements; they look upon the North Coast as the garden of the colony, and think we, the inhabitants, have nothing to do but enjoy the fruits and the flowers; they appear to know nothing about how many of us have to go without common necessaries in food and clothing.\(^1\)

In consequence, 'People are beginning to be alive now to political matters', for, as a speaker remarked at a meeting at Forth, the shoe was beginning to pinch.\(^2\)

The most significant display of popular feeling in the North-West was a series of crowded public meetings held in the larger townships during August 1872, which resolved with near unanimity that Tasmania, being too small and too incompetent to govern herself, should be at once annexed by Victoria. The Chapman ministry was generally condemned and a dissolution of parliament called for.\(^3\) Leven people declared themselves opposed to any 'railway rate, poor rate, taxation for charitable institutions, or any other tax that might be levied, from which the people at the North-West Coast would derive no benefit'.\(^4\) This reflected the general contempt felt in the new settlements for the ex-convict derelicts of Hobart Town and Launceston. But these

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1. Ibid., 7 October 1871.
2. Ibid., 13 August 1872.
3. Ibid., 3, 6, 13 and 15 August 1872.
4. Ibid., 15 August 1872.
angry gatherings were not followed by any sustained effort to impress the views of the district upon parliament. A branch of the Launceston Tasmanian Patriotic Association which was formed at Cam in October 1871 enrolled some 15 members at 5s. per head and the Devon Political Association met at Forth at least twice in the winter of 1873 to discuss affairs in parliament, but in general there was popular activity in politics only when an election was near.

Disillusion with 'the tried and found wanting old hands from Hobart Town' nevertheless combined with the electoral reforms of 1871 to encourage the election of the first residents of the North-West to parliament. In 1871 the Devon electorate was split into East Devon, which extended from Badger Head to the Don river, West Devon, from the Don to the Blythe, and Wellington from the Blythe westward to Cape Grim. A new Legislative Council seat, Mersey, was formed of the territory covered by the three Assembly seats. At the same time the franchise for the Assembly was reduced to £50 freehold, £7 annual house rent or salary of £80 per annum, and for the Council to an income of £30 per annum from freehold property or the payment of a lease of £200. It has been argued that the effects of this extension of

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1 Ibid., 7 October 1871.
2 Ibid., 19 June and 10 July 1873.
3 Ibid., 7 October 1871.
4 Ibid., 6 April 1871.
the franchise were largely counterbalanced by the declining value of property, but in the North and Far North-West the number of Assembly electors rose from 803 in 1870 to 1,193 in 1872. Many of the new men must have been settlers of limited means and thus the influence of the large absentee landholders tended to be reduced.

In the 1871 elections John Davies was soundly defeated in East Devon by Adolphus Rooke, a 'gentleman' settler from Deloraine. Rooke's victory was helped by the disgrace into which his opponent had fallen, although he raised a cheer at Latrobe by proposing union with Victoria; he fell out with the electorate by supporting the unpopular Chapman ministry and did not contest the general election of the following year. Rooke's successor was James Monaghan Dooley, formerly a government district surveyor, but now a land and stock speculator at Latrobe. Dooley had not always been popular in the North-West and his use of his government post to make advantageous land purchases on his own account was widely resented; in 1867 sundry residents of Forth threw him into a mudhole 'with the view of changing his color'. Edward Braddon considered him a

2 H.A.J., Vol.23, Appendix A, Table V.
3 L.E., 12 September 1871.
4 Ibid., 9 September 1871.
5 Ibid., 3 and 6 August 1872.
6 Ibid., 11 October 1860; 15 June 1867.
mountebank, yet Dooley's Irish affability, his flair for making his constituents feel that he was one of themselves and above all a shrewdness which enabled him to reconcile more or less the conflicting demands of his electorate and of the 'liberal' faction to which he belonged in parliament, all combined to keep him in the Assembly until his death in 1891.

The new West Devon seat was won by Charles Meredith, by origin a member of the pastoral gentry, but in politics one of the leaders of the 'liberal' faction. Neither Meredith nor his opponent, William Moore, had had any previous connection with the electorate, although Moore did live in the North-West. Meredith's platform was the more wholeheartedly radical, with intercolonial free trade, direct taxation in place of customs duties, free land grants for all and a happy combination of more public works and more retrenchment. Moore spoke on generally similar lines, if more cautiously; he favoured, however, both intercolonial free trade and annexation by Victoria. The result, a close one, must have been decided on personality rather than policy.

Defeated in West Devon, Moore hastily retreated to his home electorate, Wellington, where a second local candidate withdrew out of deference and he was returned

1 E.N.C. Braddon to James Smith, 6 October 1879, Smith papers.
2 N.W.P., 7 February 1891.
3 L.E., 12 and 16 September 1871.
unopposed. Moore was a native of the Isle of Man and had spent some time in Ontario before coming to Tasmania during the Victorian gold-rushes with sufficient capital to establish a timber mill in the North-West. Saw-milling, first at the Mersey and later at Table Cape, and the gradual purchase of large areas of rich farmland made Moore a man of some substance, and he could scarcely be called a 'yeoman' farmer. Like Dooley he was sometimes troubled with conflicting loyalties and Braddon, at least, felt that these problems tended to be solved at the expense of the truth, but sufficient of his electors believed that 'a harder working, honester, and more practical member never represented a Tasmanian constituency' to allow Moore to represent his district in parliament for 38 years. In 1877 he gave up Wellington to the leader of his 'conservative' faction, William Giblin, and successfully contested the Mersey seat of the Legislation Council with a Latrobe storekeeper; he held Mersey, and later one of its successors, Russell, until 1909.

1 Ibid., 21 September 1871.
2 'The Traveller through Tasmania', No. 34, Tasmanian Mail, 10 May 1884.
3 E. N. C. Braddon to James Smith, n.d. The letter has been placed by Major R. E. Smith between those of 22 October 1879 and 20 January 1880, but the subject suggests that it was written during the Mersey and Deloraine railway controversy of 1881.
4 L. E., 31 May 1877.
5 Ibid., 15 September 1877.
Tasmanian politics in the 1870s verged on farce. The Assembly was divided between so-called 'conservative' and 'liberal' factions, each of which opposed on principle almost everything proposed by the other, while in the Council the 'do-nothing' majority opposed almost anything proposed by anybody. Thus, with the fluid nature of majorities in the lower house (there were no fewer than seven ministries between 1872 and 1879), it was almost impossible for a government to carry out any considerable programme of legislation. J.W.N. Smith attempted to describe the Tasmanian parliament to his directors:

Colonial politicians are entirely different from the English, you have two classes (conservative & liberal) who differ essentially in their views, here the only distinction is the ins & outs, in this Colony nearly balanced, without defined principles, excepting that it is the duty of each party to strongly oppose any measure introduced by the other - It is quite amusing to see how their opinions differ when in or out of power.¹

Those who were still struggling with near-impassable roads were less amused; the forest land settlers watched this endless game of political chairs in, as the Devon Herald put it, 'the silence of despair'.²

The crucial issues of the decade were taxation and public works, inextricably linked because any major works programme would require capital to be raised by a government loan and hence additional taxation to pay

¹ V.D.L.P., O.D. 137, 27 September 1879.
² D.H., 31 August 1878.
interest thereon. It proved, however, almost impossible to increase taxes in any way acceptable to a majority of both houses, the Council, in particular, showing little enthusiasm either for new works or new taxes. Typical of the Legislative Council conservatives was Donald Cameron, the member for North Esk:

a gentleman whose life and habits are without reproach within the region of his own wide domains; but it is too much to expect a lord of the wastes, and one of the wealthiest wool kings of the colony to understand the wants of the struggling farmers....Mr Cameron... helped to dislocate the plans of each successive Ministry by casting in his vote so as to make a majority of one against them... stamping his foot upon every measure calculated to provide for the necessity of increased population and the settlement of the outlying agricultural and mineral districts... his principle was this. Tasmania is only fit to be a sheep walk - four owners (myself being one) should possess the island - keep out intruders by granting them no concessions in the way of roads and bridges, liberal land laws, etc.1

The 'majority of one' and its not inconsiderable body of extra-parliamentary supporters, justified their opposition to government-financed public works by championing the power of local authority against the tyranny of centralized control from Hobart. They argued that the handing-out of money to the various districts was a form of political bribery which destroyed the manly self-reliance of the pioneer.2 Public works were not the responsibility of the government explained the Examiner:

1 Ibid., 10 July 1880.
2 L.E., 23 March 1876.
The true function of Government is to keep the peace, and to enforce the laws. If the people are to be prosperous, happy, and progressive, they must as a rule do everything for themselves.... It will be at once conceded that Government interference can only be mischievous and wasteful, when the thing to be done is likely to be better done by individuals and local associations....

It is true that a politician's first responsibility was to induce the government to spend money in his electorate. William Moore, then Minister for Works, announced plans for a Deloraine - Circular Head telegraph line immediately before he stood for re-election in Wellington in 1873; at Emu Bay it was reported that this '...has vastly increased our local members' popularity, and will prove a nail in the coffin of an opponent should one venture to enter the lists....' But the 'do-nothings' crusade for political purity was really only a thin disguise for motives essentially selfish. The 'do-nothings' represented one side of a conflict of both districts and social classes. They were the well-established 'gentleman' settlers, many of them estate-owners in the older-settled areas where good roads had been built by convict labour at Imperial expense, although even in the North-West some of the more prosperous settlers near the coast expressed similar views:

Good roads are very desirable, but they are not everything, and I would rather wait a little longer than have them at the cost of what every Englishman prizes - a spirit of independence.

1 Ibid., 2 June 1877.
2 Ibid., 16 August 1873.
3 Ibid., 24 August 1876.
On the other side were the poorer men, the free selectors, forced back into the depths of the forest because the most accessible land had been taken up long before the first Waste Lands Act. They wanted government assistance because the road trusts, mainly dependant on local finance, were quite unable to build and maintain roads as fast as land was being selected, even with the assistance of the money due to newly-selected areas under the Waste Lands Act. They disliked customs tariffs, the form of taxation most acceptable to the gentry, and looked to their replacement by income or land taxes, the latter to bear most heavily on the absentee owners of large estates. An income tax was particularly popular among the small farmers, many of whom seemed confident that, whatever the lowest taxable income, it would be greater than their own; in October 1873 there was 'warm support' at Emu Bay for both income and absentee taxes, while at Table Cape nine-tenths of the population were allegedly in favour of the former.

The advocates of public works and direct taxation found few trustworthy friends in parliament. Charles Meredith, for example, one of the leaders of the so-called 'liberal' faction, won West Devon in 1871 on a platform of free trade, direct taxation, and more

1 Ibid., 10 July 1873.
2 Ibid., 21 September 1876 and 19 May 1877; D.H., 27 November 1878.
3 L.E., 14 October 1873.
4 Ibid., 18 October 1873.
public works. Once elected, however, he voted against the public works scheme of the 'conservative' faction, then in power, and in 1876, as Colonial Treasurer in the Reibey ministry, he raised customs duties; his ministry did put forward a works scheme, but it was rejected by the Council.

That such deception could be rewarded by the return of the offender to parliament when he next contested his seat is indicative both of the gullibility of the electors and also of the feeling that nothing better could be expected of any politician; others too managed to bluff their way out of equally inconsistent conduct. In 1876 Meredith came back unrepentant to woo the electors of West Devon; personally, he said, he disliked customs duties, but had had to yield to his colleagues, while, as for public works, he had voted against only one of the five bills drafted by the opposing faction (knowing full well, it must be presumed, that the defeat of one would cause the remaining four to be withdrawn). A meeting at the Leven carried a vote of confidence in Meredith 'with acclamation', but a number of electors were sufficiently disgusted with him to put up a rival candidate, Colonel Andrew Crawford, the pioneer of the Castra Anglo-Indian settlement, who was declared elected unopposed through an informality in Meredith's nomination. Far from rejoicing, however, in having found a member who gave every appearance of energy and honesty, the electors expressed 'great indignation' at Crawford's return and 178 of the 411 on the roll

Ibid., 3 August 1876.
petitioned him to resign;\(^1\) Crawford refused, and Meredith hastily contested and won the Norfolk Plains seat in the central North. The following year Crawford did resign and Meredith hurried back to tell the electors of his attempts, frustrated by the rich, to introduce more equitable taxation;\(^2\) he was elected unopposed.\(^3\) It might be concluded from this that many electors preferred a charlatan whom they regarded as one of themselves to an 'outsider' from India, even though the latter had a much more genuine interest in the progress of the district. Perhaps also the advantages of Meredith's prominence in one of the two Assembly factions outweighed any question of honesty; as J.M. Dooley told his electors in 1877: 'To effect any good for the district or the colony generally, I deemed it expedient to attach myself to a party'.\(^4\)

Log-rolling was carried out by faction rather than by alliances of districts with similar interests; the North-West's two 'conservative' and two 'liberal' members rarely attempted to help each other.

Politics in the 1870s were thus remarkable for the absence of principle or progress within parliament, and without for an apathy born of disillusion. In 1878 the

\(^1\) Ibid., 3 and 29 August 1876.
\(^2\) Ibid., 2 June 1877.
\(^3\) Ibid., 7 June 1877.
\(^4\) Ibid., 5 June 1877.
Devon Herald lamented that protest meetings over the state of the roads, fashionable a few years before, were now never dreamt of,\(^1\) while a Kentishbury correspondent noted that the public was 'surfeited to nausea' with politicians and added:

> How the people of Tasmania allow themselves to be gulled by two sets of men playing at ins and outs is a mystery...the people don't care who is in office if they would only be allowed to do some work.\(^2\)

The proportion of those actually on the rolls who voted in 1877 in East Devon (328 of 480) and Wellington (280 of 327) was quite high,\(^3\) but many failed to keep their registration valid; in 1878 62 names were struck off the West Devon roll and only two added.\(^4\)

In 1878-79 the game of politics was reduced, however, to such chaos as to become intolerable even to the players. In 1877 a 'conservative' ministry had induced the Legislative Council to pass a substantial public works vote, the first for a decade, and the following year another scheme of works, combined with a moderate land and dividend tax, was proposed. These measures, too, seemed likely to pass both houses, but before the Assembly could consider them the 'liberal' opposition seized on the absence of two 'conservatives' to defeat

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\(^1\) D.H., 31 August 1878.
\(^2\) Ibid., 12 July 1879.
\(^3\) L.E., 14 and 28 June 1877; H.A.J., Vol. 33, 1877, Appendix A, Table V.
\(^4\) D.H., 20 March 1878.
the government; although the works scheme included a substantial sum for the North-West. Dooley and Meredith voted with their faction against the ministry. The new 'liberal' government proposed equally ambitious works, to be financed by income and property taxes, but the Legislative Council rejected the income tax, failed to agree on any alternative, bandied recriminations with the Assembly and finally refused to grant the government supply.\(^1\) The Crowther ministry was therefore in trouble enough when the resignation through ill-health of one of its supporters, Charles Meredith, placed its survival in the hands of the electors of West Devon.

The candidates at the by-election differed more in background and, seemingly, intelligence, than in policy. J.R. Chaffey, the ministerial hope, was a farmer whose lack of wealth and social refinement (he dropped his h's) aroused a surprising amount of indignation for a supposedly 'yeoman' community;\(^2\) it seemed that a candidate must appear to be a gentleman even if he had not principles to match. In opposition was Edward Braddon, an independent with 'conservative' leanings, who had only recently retired from the Indian Civil Service to a farm near Forth. Braddon's policy speech must have come as a breath of fresh air to many:

\[
\text{Gentlemen, the matter of governing Tasmania properly does not in great principles differ from the governing of any other British Colony & I dare to assert that it is a positive advantage to me that I have had but}
\]

\(^1\) Ibid., 17 May 1879.
\(^2\) Ibid., 23 July 1879.
little experience of the system of parochial management that wd appear to have shortly passed current for government in this country. I come fresh from a land where it was not the special object of political parties to remain in office & tide over barren sessions anyhow so that the party in power retained the power they so little utilised - a land in wch the time & best powers of the governing body were devoted to measures that advanced the best interests of the country - not to squabble over petty business that a vestry meeting wd think beneath attention....the country was crying out for bread & the House of Assembly sat pondering over the best sort of granite to give in response. The country cried aloud for adjustment of ways and means; for a recast of customs tariff & for other things that are as life to the colony: & the grave & revd. servants in the H of A sat deliberating how they shd prevent boys of 15 from smoking in the street or keep the cab ranks empty of the Sabbath.1

Braddon looked to customs duties, suitably revised to bear most heavily on luxuries rather than necessities, to furnish the bulk of the revenue, supplemented, if required, by a land tax of perhaps 2s 0d on every ten acres occupied and improved and 5s 0d on every acre unimproved or held by absentee; revenue from crown land sales should be used only for public works and not diverted to other government purposes. Finally, although desiring 'to see wealth taxed fairly in proportion to its capacity, I would wish to attract capital to our shores in every possible manner

1 There is a copy of this speech at the front of the Braddon - James Smith correspondence file in the Smith papers.
consistent with justice'. It was a constructive, even radical, platform, save only for the omission of an income tax which Braddon felt to be inquisitorial, costly of collection, and an encouragement to mendacity.\(^1\)

Chaffey followed his faction in proposing an income tax\(^2\), but his platform was otherwise very similar to that of his opponent, as one of his detractors pointed out:

The downright impudence of such a man as Chaffey thrusting himself forward to fill a place in an Assembly which requires education, intelligence, experience, and refinement...The man has not an idea of his own....He coolly takes three or four 'planks' out of Mr Braddon's platform, nails a single plank of his own (my native land) to it, and from this wretched structure he almost echoes Mr Braddon's own words.\(^3\)

Braddon won the seat by 170 votes to 148,\(^4\) a modest victory for the candidate so obviously the more able; Chaffey's addresses had been so deficient that two meetings passed motions of no confidence in him,\(^5\) a most unusual procedure, it being the accepted practice for supporters to express their confidence in the candidate while the unconvinced abstained from voting. The 'liberals' may have swayed some by arguing that Chaffey's return was essential if the ministry was to survive and

\(^{1}\) Ibid.
\(^{2}\) Ibid., 16 July 1879.
\(^{3}\) Ibid., 30 July 1879.
\(^{4}\) Ibid., 2 August 1879.
\(^{5}\) Ibid., 19 and 23 July 1879.
political stability achieved;\(^1\) against this, however, was the fact that the ministry was at loggerheads with the Council and unlikely to accomplish much even if it did have a majority in the Assembly.\(^2\) Promises of an income tax, too, may have won the poorer constituents to Chafey, although Braddon's tax proposals also struck at the rich and in particular at such absentee landlords as the V.D.L. Company, whose virgin acres were a constant grievance in the North-West. But the election must have been decided essentially on personality rather than faction or policy. Both candidates polled conspicuously better in their home districts than in the constituency as a whole, a characteristic of many elections probably attributable to closer acquaintance with the electors and a feeling among the latter that a local resident could get more money for local works. Even at Forth, however, 73 opposed Braddon for the 100 who supported him, suggesting that many were still suspicious of an 'outsider', who probably wooed them with a greater dignity and reserve than the colony's indigenous politicians.

Braddon's election was shortly followed by the resignation of the Crowther government and, after some delay, a 'ministry of all the talents' emerged in October 1879, led by William Giblin, but including also two former 'liberals'. This strong new ministry was the beginning of a calmer and more constructive period

\(^1\) Ibid., 16 July 1879.
\(^2\) Ibid., 27 September 1879.
in Tasmanian politics. A formal opposition took some years to emerge and until then there was, as the Devon Herald noted with satisfaction:

no such thing as party division in the House of Assembly, Honourable members may sit where they please, and may vote as their conscience dictates without suffering the indignity of being pulled down by the coat tails if they happen to hold one idea in common with their political opponents.\(^1\)

Giblin's proposals to increase the revenue by tariff reform and a tax of 9d in £1 on the annual value of realised property were accepted by parliament in 1880, but the upper house at first showed little enthusiasm for the major scheme of public works which the new taxes were intended to finance. Such advocates of local responsibility as James Aikenhead, the member for Tamar, were still strong in the Legislative Council;

for some time past the Government had been carried on by virtual bribery and disguised corruption. Instead of confining itself to its legitimate functions of preserving the peace, and securing equal liberty and justice for all, it had become a mere bureau for collecting and spending money....the outlying districts have been thoroughly demoralised in the matter of expenditure. They had been taught to look for everything to be done for them instead of going to work themselves, as their plucky predecessors did.\(^2\)

\(^1\) Ibid., 7 October 1882.
\(^2\) Ibid., 25 May 1880.
\(^3\) Ibid., 20 October 1880.
The Devon Herald ventured, however, to point out that the 'plucky predecessors' had enjoyed certain advantages, such as free land, convict labour and roads built at Imperial expense, while they had not been required to pay tea and sugar duties, or police, road and real estate taxes.¹

The Council was nevertheless induced to pass substantial public works votes almost annually during the 1880s, a change of heart attributable to better relations with the Assembly, the beneficial influence of mining on the colonial revenue and the gradual replacement of some of the older arch-conservatives by men of rather more progressive views. There were still, however, clashes between the government and the upper house, in particular towards the end of the decade when attempts were made further to reform customs tariffs and to assess land tax on the basis of the capital, rather than the annual, value of property.

The generous government works spending of the 1880s inevitably whetted the appetite of the electorate for more, rather than caused it to be thankful for that already received, and public works remained the most important single political issue in the North-West. A questionnaire set out by the people of Kentishbury in 1886 gives some idea of the issues uppermost in the electors' minds. The three candidates for East Devon were asked if they favoured:

(1) The building of a Railton-Sheffield railway.

¹ Ibid.
(2) The bringing of the Sheffield-Tarleton road under the Main Roads Act (and hence eligible for government subsidy).
(3) Public expenditure to open up unsettled districts.
(4) Payment of members of parliament.
(5) The continuation of the present system of pensions.
(6) Payment by results in education.
(7) A reciprocal trade agreement with Victoria.
(8) Compulsory vaccination.

The reply was expected to be 'yes' for the first three and the seventh questions and 'no' for the others, payment by results (favoured by the Roman Catholics) and compulsory vaccination being especially unpopular in this strongly Non-conformist community.¹

Most electors still wanted the government to spend more money on their own district, while spending no more and if possible less on others. The Devon Herald in 1887 supported F.W. Grubb, who stood for the Meander Legislative Council seat on a platform of opposition to railways in new settlements other than the North-West, to a Tasmanian Agent-General in London, to payment of members of parliament and to a Tasmanian university; the last-named plank was popular among the farmers, who disliked the idea of government money going to such an impractical book-learning institution.² Grubb was undecided on the question of an income tax, which seemed less popular in the North-West in the late 1880s than it

¹ Ibid., 30 March 1886.
² Ibid., 4 March 1887.
had been 20 years earlier, probably because more farmers were by then likely to have an income sufficient to be taxed.

Parliamentary reform was intermittently a subject of interest, particularly when the legislature threw out a measure likely to benefit the North-West.\textsuperscript{1} In 1885 a long-overdue redistribution gave East Devon and Wellington two Assembly members each, West Devon remaining a single electorate. The old Mersey seat in the upper house was subdivided, voters east of the Mersey river being included in Meander, those between the Mersey and the Blythe in the new Mersey and those from the Blythe westward to Cape Grim in a new electorate, Russell.\textsuperscript{2}

The same act reduced the Assembly franchise to include the owner or occupier of any property which appeared in the Assessment Rolls, or anyone who was in receipt of at least £60 per annum from salary or wages.\textsuperscript{3} There had been little open agitation for such a reduction in the North-West, but new voters were quick to enroll:

\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid., 3 November 1880; 28 September 1881; James Smith to E.N.C. Braddon 24 July 1882, Smith papers.
\item \textit{D.H.}, 25 September and 13 November 1885.
\item Walch's Tasmanian Almanac (Hobart, 1886), p.63.
\end{enumerate}
House of Assembly electors

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<th>East Devon</th>
<th>West Devon</th>
<th>Wellington</th>
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<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>733</td>
<td>587</td>
<td>708</td>
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<td>1885</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>575</td>
<td>679</td>
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<td>1886</td>
<td>1,290</td>
<td>1,013</td>
<td>1,550</td>
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This was still considerably less than manhood suffrage. In 1891 there were in East Devon 2,306 males aged 21 and over and 2,132 names on the roll, in West Devon 2,547 and 1,351 and in Wellington 2,332 and 1,740; there was no apparent explanation of the very high percentage of men enrolled in East Devon, which reflected a sudden increase in the number of electors from 1,649 in 1889 to 2,132 in 1891. Nor did this extension of the franchise cause an upsurge of interest in politics. The 1886 campaign was conducted 'in very quiet style' in the North-West, the Devon Herald deprecating the fact that:

In Tasmania matters political appear to be left for the 'old folks', or at least for persons of certain age, and the young men of the colony... seem to think that it is a dry subject, and actually not worth exchanging for the various sports that now engross all their attention.  

The Legislative Council franchise was similarly reduced to a freehold yeilding £20 per annum, or a leasehold of £80 per annum. It is impossible to gauge

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3 D.H., 16 July 1886.
4 Walch, op.cit., 1888, p.63.
the exact effect of this reform because of the simultaneous alteration of electoral boundaries, but there was some increase in the number of Council electors in the North-West; the old Mersey seat had 312 electors in 1884,¹ but by 1887 the new Mersey and Russell seats, which covered a rather smaller area, had a combined enrollment of 617.² It was still, however, a very restricted franchise, which must in part explain the lack of interest in Council elections in the district; in 1891 probably only one adult male in five in the North-West was an elector of the upper house.

Some politicians, particularly J.M. Dooley, suggested that members should at least have their expenses re-imbursed, if not actually be paid a salary, but this found little favour with the electors, many of whom thought that too many idlers were receiving government salaries or pensions already. Edward Braddon warned his constituents that:

From the time in which members become a paid class membership will be too often sought not out of any spirit of patriotism but for the sake of the salary! Your support will be claimed by needy adventurers who cannot make a livelihood otherwise instead of by men who can afford to be thoroughly honest of purpose because they are independent.³

Without payment membership of parliament was inevitably restricted to the relatively wealthy and, in spite of the extended franchise, the district's members

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¹ Ibid., 1885, p.36.
² Ibid., 1888, p.62.
³ E.N.C. Braddon's policy speech of July 1879, op.cit.
in the 1880s differed little from those of earlier years. J.M. Dooley held one of the East Devon seats throughout the decade, the other going to a Torquay doctor, Arthur Young. Braddon held West Devon until 1888, when he temporarily gave up politics to become Tasmanian Agent-General in London; his successor was John M'Call (Junior), also a doctor. Giblin retired from Wellington in 1884 after which the seat was held for two years by J.W.N. Smith, colonial manager of the V.D.L. Company, and then by two residents of, and substantial landowners in, the Table Cape district, both of them from the ranks of the gentry. In the Council William Moore continued to hold first the old Mersey seat and then Russell, while the new Mersey seat was taken by James 'Philosopher' Smith, the first true 'yeoman' farmer to represent the North-West, even if he was by then a man of fame and some property. Smith retired in 1888 and was replaced by John M'Call (senior), a Scot who had begun a successful career as a pharmacist at the Mersey in the 1850s.1

Membership of parliament was not, on the whole, keenly sought. The Devon Herald lamented in 1878:

How can we look for men of talent and common sense to take part in the legislature, with the gloomy prospect of being detained for months away from hearth and home listening to the maudlin nonsense of political charlatans who have no aim but their own selfish ends to serve.2

1 The Cyclopedia of Tasmania (Hobart, 1900), Vol.1, p.78.
2 D.H., 11 December 1878.
Even in the 1880s, when proceedings in parliament tended to be fairly constructive, some candidates seemed to feel that membership was merely an irksome duty to class and district. J.W.N Smith, in informing his directors of a general desire that he should contest Wellington, remarked:

The general feeling is that if a local man represented he he would get much more done for the district in the way of opening up the country for prospecting & settlement & in the way of Public Works generally than a stranger, that the Towns are already over represented in consequence of several country districts having members that live in Hobart or Launceston, & that I am about the only man available.

I have refused over & over again within the last six months, but recently a Hobart man has been quietly canvassing the District & I have consented to be nominated....I am not at all anxious for the post as it will involve an expense I can ill afford - & I only conditionally consented because I think my presence in Parliament would be advantageous to the Company, at the present time the Ministry is not overstrong & will be glad to conciliate any new Member by meeting his views.  

There were some perquisites for members, even without salaries. Smith felt that he could look after his company's affairs while sitting in the Assembly because:

as a Member I should be able to send telegrams & receive replies free of charge so that I should be in constant communication with your Burnie office - I should also make a point of getting home once a fortnight at least.

1 V.D.L.P., O.D. 253, 23 January 1885.
2 Ibid.
Other members found it less easy to manage their private affairs. Edward Braddon wrote to 'Philosopher' Smith, one of his most faithful supporters:

May I ask you to help my wife in her present farm difficulties - cattle running riot in our paddocks. Our potatoes are going to the dogs and now our hay is not being cut in time & Williams may not do what is right about fencing on our common sideline. While I am working for the District here I am helpless as to home affairs.\(^1\)

Most discouraging of all to the conscientious member was the indifference, or jealousy, with which the various parts of the colony, even neighbouring constituencies, regarded each other's progress. Braddon found that:

This matter of winning men over to a reasonable view as to opening up the N.W. Coast is the great difficulty that I have to encounter. In this I have no warm friends or worthy allies in the House. Mr. Giblin is a non-resident and as such unenthusiastic. Mr. Dooley is a mountebank whose advocacy is worthless. I stand alone.\(^2\)

The disintegration of the old political factions in 1879 reduced the number of occasions on which North-West members voted against each other in the Assembly but clashes of interest between different parts of the district continued; a long and acrimonious dispute between East and West Devon over the route of the Deloraine - North-West Coast railway encouraged parliament twice to reject the bill authorising its

\(^1\) E.N.C. Braddon to James Smith, 21 January 1880, Smith papers.

\(^2\) Ibid., 6 October 1879.
construction. Nor did a member receive any thanks for a proposal intended for the general good of the colony, but which seemed to conflict with the interests of his own electorate; in 1880 Braddon moved for a parliamentary enquiry into alleged corruption and inefficiency in the Public Works Department and was severely censured by the Devon Herald, on the grounds that this would prejudice the Legislative Council against further public works votes.

In voting large sums for public works during the 1880s, parliament at last recognised the inadequacy of local government, especially in the newer settlements, to undertake all that was required of it. In the North-West this change of policy was of particular benefit to the road trusts which, in the absence of municipalities, were the most important agencies of local authority. Each trust had seven members elected by an annual meeting of ratepayers and was empowered to levy a rate of up to 1s 0d in £ on the annual value of property within their district. In addition the government paid a subsidy equal at first to half and later to the full amount realised from the rates.

The trusts' job was a thankless one. Those in the North-West almost invariably struck the maximum rate permissible and sometimes supplemented it by special levies and voluntary 'working bees', but their income was still quite inadequate. The Leven trustees in 1886:

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1 Ibid., 31 July and 5 August 1881; D.H., 22 September 1880.
2 D.H., 9 September 1880.
3 Ibid., 30 September 1887.
had no less than 40 miles of road in their charge, and the rates and subsidy amounted to £560 per annum - hardly enough to make half a mile of road - and with this sum the roads had to be made and maintained.\footnote{Ibid., 29 June 1886.}

It was therefore impossible to please everybody and, being a more accessible object of blame than the government, the trusts received much abuse and very little sympathy from those they represented:

We find someone continually complaining of the doings or undoings of road trustees; of money spent in front of Mr. A's that should have been spent near Mr. B's; of this bit of road being spoilt, and of funds thrown away on that. We never yet knew of any trustee pleasing everybody, nor do we ever expect to find such a phenomenon; but we think that really competent and sensible gentlemen, who do the best for their districts, occasionally find their way into these positions, and often deserve praise where they get the reverse. If the landholders are so everlastingly dissatisfied with the trustees elected, why in the name of common sense do they not find their way to the meeting of their Trust at which the election takes place, and use the votes to which they are entitled to return men 'after their own heart?' The annual meetings on the Coast are, as a rule, miserably attended, and we think that if more interest was manifested in them there would be less grumbling ....A man that is appointed, whether by a bare majority, or by an easy victory, to a position in the road trust, the municipal council, or even one of the Houses of Parliament, when only a very small percentage of the electors vote, is, to a great extent, paralyzed in his efforts for his district by the feeling that no interest is taken in his doings...\footnote{Ibid., 8 May 1885.}
Trustees were allowed to borrow money for road works on the security of the rates, but as they were personally responsible for repayment of the loan they were understandably unwilling to do so; the ratepayers, in any case, showed little enthusiasm for a special levy to pay loan interest. The only unconditional government assistance for road works before 1880, apart from the rates subsidies, was the money due to areas of new selection under the Waste Lands Acts of 1863 and 1870. This was administered not through the trusts, but by government-appointed Local Boards of Works, which in the North-West had a chequered career of some ten years before their functions were taken over by the Public Works Department; their task was much hindered by the inevitable squabbles over where money should be spent and also by 'the tendency of the Legislature...to divert and appropriate a portion of these funds to other purposes than roads and bridges'.¹ In 1878 the first Giblin ministry tried to bring the maintenance of all main roads under the control of the P.W.D., but was thwarted by the Legislative Council. A compromise bill was eventually passed in 1880, whereby the government paid a variable main roads subsidy to the municipalities where they existed and to the road trusts where they did not.² In the North-West the subsidy (ranging from


² See proceedings in H.A.J. on bills 12 of 1878, 13 of 1879 and 47 (44 Vic. No.30) of 1880.
£15 to £35 per mile per annum) applied only to the trunk coast road and several of the trusts preferred to leave its administration in the hands of the P.W.D.¹

As an encouragement to settlers to build their own roads, bridges and harbours, instead of coming open-handed to the government, parliament in 1872 sanctioned the Local Public Works Act, whereby a rateable district could be proclaimed on the petition of a majority of ratepayers to borrow money from the government for some specific project. The district had to levy rates sufficient to pay three per cent interest and also to establish a sinking fund to repay one half of the capital. Some harbour improvement was carried out in the North-West under the act, but those who wanted roads and bridges preferred to live in the hope of unconditional government grants. The act was repealed in 1879 by the Giblin ministry and the government took over those works already commenced, waiving all further payments by the districts concerned. The Devon Herald regarded 'the hybrid act of Parliament which enabled a bare majority of landholders to tax their poorer neighbours for jetties and breakwaters as a legalised mode of pickpocketing...' and rejoiced in its end:

It was indeed high time any law so insidious and unjust as the Local Public Works Act ceased to exist. Its very title was a misnomer. There is no such thing as a Local Public Work, unless we regard all public works as local....The Penguin breakwater is not anymore local than the Queen's Wharf, Launceston....²

² D.H., 24 May 1879.
The massive government works schemes of the 1880s reduced the importance of the road trusts, but few in the North-West seemed to resent this extension of centralized authority. One proponent of 'manly independence' in road works claimed that the trusts could make the same sum of money go twice as far as could the P.W.D., but, in spite of many accusations and some proof of Departmental extravagance and inefficiency during the 1880s, most people seemed to think that the government spent money to better advantage than the trusts. The P.W.D. had sufficient staff and funds to complete a large job quickly, whereas local jealousies had increased the number of trusts in the North-West from one in 1856 to 11 in 1890, many of them so small as to have to work in fits and starts as money came in from the rates and subsidies.

Municipal government, the ideal of the pastoral gentry, aroused little enthusiasm among the small farmers, and no municipalities were established in the North-West until the compulsory subdivision of the whole of Tasmania in 1906. From time to time the business and professional men of the larger towns,

1 _L.E._, 24 August 1876.
3 _D.H._, 20 July 1878; see Walch, op.cit., for an annual summary of road trust districts and rates.
particularly Latrobe, petitioned the government for a municipality, but on every occasion they were defeated by rural-urban and inter-town jealousy. The farmers feared the diversion of money from country roads to such urban frivolities as street lights, pavements and water supplies, and the smaller towns foresaw a loss of dignity and trade to the new municipal capital.¹

The *Examiner* believed that:

Municipal government has never had a fair trial in the rural districts of this island. The powers of the Councils have been so circumscribed by law and other co-equal bodies that they have scarcely any higher functions than the control of the police, the establishment of pounds, and the issue of licences to butchers and the keepers of lodging-houses. The formation and maintenance of roads is taken out of their hands, and vested in separate road trusts. To carry out the behests of the Board of Education, local school boards are appointed; and even to supervise the expenditure of the small amounts reserved by Statute from the Land Fund a Public Works Board is deemed necessary for each district.²

The supporters of municipal government made much of the advantages of local control of police and justice, in contrast to the present tyranny of police magistrates being forced on unwilling districts by the politicians of Hobart.³ In the North-West, however, the police magistrates gave little cause for complaint, while

¹ D.H., 17 February, 25 April and 2 May 1883.
² L.E., 16 September 1873.
³ Ibid., 3 August 1876.
control of the police from Hobart not only seemed cheaper but also ensured that the force was not so close to its employers as to have 'one law for Jack and another for his Master'. One correspondent of the *Tasmanian* held little regard either for the colony's municipal police or for the councillors who controlled them:

> In many parts of Tasmania there might as well be no law at all....His Worship the Warden, Mr. Council Clerk, and Mr. Superintendent of Police, with Councillors Muff and Duff, play friendly games of Yankee grab or whiskey poker till the small hours of Sabbath morn, and Constables Makeshift, Wantbread, and Paidwink know their duty - I mean their implied instructions - better than to lay informations against anybody else.1

Municipal government therefore promised the farmers little or nothing save the possibility of increased rates and in the North-West they successfully defeated every such scheme for urban aggrandisement.

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1 'The Traveller through Tasmania', No.31, *Tasmanian Mail*, 5 April 1884.
CHAPTER 6

COLONY AND NATION 1890-1910

The depression made the problem of reconciling expenditure with revenue the main concern of government and parliament for much of the last decade of the nineteenth century. Both of the rather loose Assembly factions tried to keep the colony solvent without at the same time stopping all progress by a combination of retrenchment and increased taxation, differing only on the question of a tax on the unimproved capital value of land, which the more radical Braddon party alone favoured. The Legislative Council, however, clung to its traditional mistrust of new taxation. The great bulk of colonial revenue had always come from the customs and the Council saw no reason for agreeing to new direct taxes which, whatever form they took, must cause the rich, and in particular the large landowner, to pay more; if the government was in difficulties let it retrench. The Fysh ministry resigned over a tax deadlock with the Council in August 1892 and was replaced by a new government under Henry Dobson,1 which itself resigned less than two years later after the Council had rejected an income tax of 10d in £1 on realised wealth and 8d in £1 on the fruits of personal exertion, and the Assembly a graduated land tax; the defeat in the lower house was caused by the defection to the opposition of three large landowners.2 There

1 N.W.P., 18 August 1892.
2 Ibid., 5 and 12 May 1894.
followed a new Braddon-Fysh ministry which induced both Houses to accept, if in mutilated form, bills to increase customs duties and establish an income tax, but the Council consistently rejected an unimproved land tax, which would have compelled the pastoralist and the speculator to pay as much on their little-used or virgin acres as the owner of a fully-developed farm.

Taxation was discussed at almost every political meeting in the North-West, but candidates found it uncertain ground on which to build a platform, not only because the policies of the two Assembly factions were both pragmatic and generally similar, but also because there was considerable difference of opinion between rich and poor in each electorate. The larger landholders opposed any new impost save a mild non-graduated land tax of perhaps 3d in £1 and watched the 'democratic' tendencies of the House of Assembly with some alarm; from time to time there were uneasy murmurs about single taxers and land nationalisation. J.W.N. Smith of the V.D.L. Company mused on the impending defeat of the Dobson ministry:

It will be a relief to get rid of John Henry [the Treasurer] with his Henry Georgeism but the present opposition have always been considered the more Radical party of the two, so that we may get out of the frying pan into the fire.  

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1 Ibid., 31 July and 12 August 1894.
2 Ibid., 20 December 1894.
The *North-West Post*, by then a fairly conservative journal, regarded an income tax as a necessary evil, but opposed higher customs duties, particularly on such farm necessities as manure and machinery, and also an unimproved land tax. The smaller farmers understandably sought to make 'broad acres' pay his 'fair share' and favoured a graduated or unimproved land tax, provided that farms worth less than £500, or better still £1,000, were exempt, and a tax on income from realised wealth; a tax on the fruits of personal exertion was less popular.

Retrenchment was therefore a safer theme for the hustings than taxation, more so in the 1890s than ever before, for the massive public works spending and agricultural prosperity of the previous decade had left their mark on the community; most farmers were reasonably satisfied with their roads, while many must by now have been sufficiently well off to prefer the notion of economies to new land and income taxes.

But, as always, retrenchment was easier to propose than effect; 'Everybody cries out for retrenchment, everyone has some friend whose claim is unique when retrenchment touches them & so it goes on', Alice Braddon

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2 Ibid., 29 May 1894.
4 *N.W.P.*, 23 October 1894.
5 Ibid., 7 October 1897.
complained during her husband's premiership.¹ In the North-West there was still fairly general agreement that retrenchment was something to be carried out among urban idlers and theorists rather than the hard-working farmers. Thus C.B.M. Fenton, one of the two Assembly members for Wellington, urged the Dobson ministry to close unprofitable government railways (none of which was in the North-West) and sweep away such extravagances as the University, Council of Agriculture, Technical School, Central Board of Health and the Agent-General in London,² but when the axe of economy came closer to home, as in the pruning of post and telegraph services, there was much righteous indignation.³ Nevertheless there were occasional signs of sympathy for the government's difficulties; a meeting at Ulverstone unanimously approved the reduction of the road trust subsidy,⁴ while the residents of Melrose Creek volunteered 315 loads of stone and 31 days labour for road work.⁵

Yet retrenchment was more of a parrot-cry than a coherent policy and elections in the 1890s were still decided very largely on issues personal and parochial; as the North-West Post remarked:

¹ Alice Braddon to Mrs James Smith, 23 July 1894, Smith papers.
² N.W.P., 12 August 1893, W.T., 12 August 1893.
³ N.W.P., 2 April and 2 May 1895.
⁴ Ibid., 12 July 1894.
⁵ Ibid., 11 December 1894.
Complaint is often made that in this Colony elections are decided on personal grounds and not on broad questions of policy; but how can it be otherwise, when nine times out of ten there is practically no question put before the electors?¹

Braddon's defence of his West Devon Assembly seat against Thomas Collett, an Ulverstone auctioneer, was fairly typical of campaigns of the period. The cares of the premiership had inevitably reduced the time Braddon could spend in his electorate (the people of Sprent complained he had not been near them for two and a half years)² and on returning to seek re-election he found himself in trouble. The 'wandering apology', as the North-West Post called him,³ was continually pressed to explain his past conduct and had little time to outline a policy for the future, save for promises of an unimproved land tax and the construction of an Ulverstone - Burnie railway.⁴ Encouraged by Collett the electorate showed much concern for Braddon's political morality, condemning in particular the licensing of Tattersall's Lottery, the granting of 'enormous concessions' to the Great Western Railway and suggesting that he had been rewarded for the lease of Maria Island to a grape and silk venture;⁵ so keenly was the disgrace of Tattersall's felt that Braddon was

¹ Ibid., 24 April 1894.
² Ibid., 7 January 1897.
³ Ibid., 12 December 1896.
⁴ Ibid., 16 January 1897.
⁵ Ibid., 28 November 1896, 5 January 1897.
censured by the Forth Wesleyan anniversary tea meeting, while at his Penguin election meeting fully an hour was devoted to the same topic.

Collett added few other planks to this platform of righteousness and even those that he did add tended to cancel each other out; thus he disliked 'unreasonable' retrenchment in postal services and public works in the North-West as much as he did the imposition of taxes on the unimproved capital value of land and on income derived from personal exertions. Nevertheless for a political unknown challenging a sitting Premier he ran Braddon surprisingly close, being defeated by 407 formal votes to 338; Braddon was saved once again by strong support (110-40) from his home district of Forth.

The size of the anti-Braddon vote might be seen as a measure of the outraged principles of an honest yeomanry; over-liberal views on Sunday activities had been known to affect a candidate's popularity in the North-West. But the events surrounding the Devonport and Latrobe elections of the following year suggest that moral considerations were not always important in politics. In June 1898 an election was held for Devonport, recently formed of one half of the old East

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1 Ibid., 19 December 1896.
2 Ibid., 16 January 1897.
3 Ibid., 5 January 1897.
4 Ibid., 21 January 1897.
5 Ibid., 19 May 1891.
Devon dual electorate, because of the retirement of John Henry. In the poll William Aikenhead, who had retired from a partnership in the Launceston Examiner to settle at Devonport some years previously, defeated Dr John M'Call by 394 votes to 379, but was subsequently disqualified for treating. Thereupon Henry Murray resigned the other East Devon seat, now Latrobe, contested the new Devonport election with M'Call and defeated him by 520 votes to 349. The electors of Latrobe then confirmed the triumph of treating over puritanism by giving Aikenhead 222 votes to his opponents combined total of 116.

Braddon's cardinal error seems, therefore, to have been not his moral failings, real or imagined, but the neglect of West Devon in the interests of the colony as a whole; political principle was merely a useful stick with which to beat him. He had proposed higher customs duties (rejected by the Assembly) on farm necessities, he had carried out 'unreasonable' retrenchment and, wasteful of time if not money, repealed the 'half-rent' clause of the Income Tax Act, under which the farmer's taxable income had been taken as being one half of the annual value of his land if he owned it, or of the rent he paid if he did not; this forced the farmers to account for:

1 Ibid., 5 April 1902.
2 Ibid., 23 June 1898.
3 Ibid., 17 September 1898.
4 Ibid., 18 October 1898.
5 Ibid., 27 October 1898.
every boiling of potatoes, every sack of wheat they take to the mill, every sheep, lamb, pig, or chicken they kill, or every pound of butter or dozen of eggs they use in their families. ¹

Perhaps too the indignation at Braddon's concessions to private companies was the result less of high principles than of the realisation that there was nothing for West Devon in them; his private agreement with the Emu Bay Railway Company, sufficiently dubious to bring the resignation of the Attorney-General, Andrew Inglis Clark, was hailed with enthusiasm in the North-West, ² it must be presumed because the Emu Bay line would benefit the district as much as the reviled Great Western would harm it by linking the West Coast with Hobart instead of Burnie.

Local popularity, too, seems to have weighed more heavily with the electors than principles or policies. In the Meander Legislative Council election of May 1893 the sitting member, F.W. Grubb of Deloraine, was opposed by a farmer named Sykes from the Latrobe district. In policy there was little to distinguish them, both preferring retrenchment to further taxation, but whereas Deloraine voted 106-28 for Grubb, Latrobe voted 54-26 for Sykes; Grubb, however, was better supported in 'neutral' areas and won the seat by 207 votes to 118. ³

Very occasionally in the 1890s the electorate was offered an honestly constructive policy. William Barnard Button, an old and respected pioneer, fought West Devon

¹ Ibid., 31 December 1896.  
² Ibid., 28 October 1897.  
³ Ibid., 4 May 1893.
in 1891 on a platform of inter-colonial free trade, manhood suffrage, free education and the teaching of morality rather than sectarian religion in the schools (he announced himself a supporter of the atheist Joseph Symes and the *Liberator*).¹ The result was hardly encouraging; at Penguin he was taken severely to task for his un-Christian views² and at the poll he received only 67 of the 741 formal votes cast.³

The electorate's 'What's in it for us?' obsession was equally evident in the campaign for federation. There were the usual emotive references to national defence and imperial glory, but it seems likely that the people of the North-West voted overwhelmingly for federation essentially because they were convinced it would put more money in their pockets by opening hitherto protected markets and, above all, that it would remove for ever the dread of full-scale protection in New South Wales.

The federation question hovered in the background for much of the last decade of the nineteenth century. In January 1890:

The general consensus of opinion with some most notable exceptions, seems to be favourable to the federal idea, but, as yet, the minds of men

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¹ Ibid., 19 March 1891.
² Ibid.
³ Ibid., 23 May 1891.
are in a most confused condition as to what does, or should, constitute federation—colonial, imperial or intercolonial.\(^1\)

For the next few years, however, occasional newspaper editorials alone brought federation before the public's notice, although Andrew Inglis Clark spoke on the subject in September 1894 at the invitation of the Latrobe and Devonport Chambers of Commerce. At Latrobe the hall was crowded to the doors to hear Clark tell of the advantages of intercolonial free trade for agriculture and the timber industry, of the desirability of union for better defence and of the coming, as in the United States, of 'a greater, higher, and a nobler national life than they had now'; at the end there was loud applause.\(^2\) In March 1896 Sir Philip Fysh, then Treasurer in the Braddon government, spoke on similar lines to well-attended meetings at Ulverstone and Devonport,\(^3\) but three months later an address by Braddon himself drew only a 'miserable' attendance, thanks to the rival attractions of a football match.\(^4\)

The campaign for the convention election in 1897 was organised largely by the district's own would-be statesmen, for the non-residents contented themselves with addressing the electors through newspaper advertisements. Intercolonial free trade was much

\(^1\) Ibid., 4 January 1890.
\(^2\) Ibid., 27 September 1894.
\(^3\) Ibid., 21 and 31 March 1896.
\(^4\) Ibid., 30 June and 2 July 1896.
emphasised as the first advantage of union; as Dr John M'Call told an Ulverstone meeting:

19 out of every 20 persons put that as one of the first considerations and no scheme of Federation would be complete without a definite promise of intercolonial freetrade at an early date.¹

Braddon, John Henry and F.W. Piesse (the latter the only Hobart candidate to reach the North-West) were careful to point out that a federal government would exercise only the powers granted to it by the constitution and that equal representation in the Senate would make federation a partnership rather than a union,² but states' rights did not seem an issue of great concern in the North-West; the Post remarked with some satisfaction that the state parliaments would be little more than glorified boards of works.³ Defence and the transfer of debts to the federal government were also frequently mentioned, while F.W. Piesse was applauded at Ulverstone when he looked forward to federal control of immigration:

If they at present found it difficult to rise to a higher state of civilisation, how much more so would it be if they freely admitted large numbers of Asiatics?⁴

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¹ Ibid., 18 February 1897.
² Ibid., 18, 20 and 23 February 1897.
³ Ibid., 25 May 1899.
⁴ Ibid., 18 February 1897.
The meetings were usually well attended, as indeed was almost any political gathering when there was no other entertainment offering, but public interest was passive, rather than active and the Devonport Chamber of Commerce failed to get a quorum at a meeting called to endorse suitable candidates.¹ Few voted; at West Devonport only 96 of the 298 electors turned out, and at Nook only ten of 47.² In the absence of clearly-defined issues the North-West followed the rest of the colony in electing the leading politicians of the day, although there was the usual 'favourite son' vote in each electorate; John Henry, fourth in the colonial poll, was first in both Devonport and Latrobe, while William Moore, ninth in the Tasmanian returns was the first choice of his home electorate of Wellington. Braddon must still have been at odds with some of his constituents as he came second in the colony as a whole but only fourth in West Devon.³

The election over, federation was again relegated to the columns of the newspapers, with reports on the progress of the convention and, from time to time, editorials underlining the advantages of free trade. In February 1898 the Post berated states' rights conservatives and welfare-seeking radicals alike for so delaying the drawing-up of the constitution as to make the people weary of the whole business:

¹ Ibid., 16 and 18 February 1897.
² Ibid., 6 March 1897.
³ Ibid.
We have never ventured to hope that there was any whole-souled enthusiasm on the part of the masses for Federation. Passively, the people are in favour of union, and a determined rally by Federal leaders just before the mass vote was taken might have developed the feeling that existed, and caused a sufficiently heavy poll to secure the acceptance of the Constitution.¹

Less than two months later Braddon opened the campaign for a 'Yes' vote with a series of meetings in the larger towns, all enthusiastic and most well-attended, although Saturday evening shopping proved a strong counter-attraction at Ulverstone.² As before free trade was very much his main theme, not only because of its financial advantages, but also because it would check the present tendency of the colonies to so drift apart as to make it possible that customs offices might one day become military outposts; he pointed out also that the constitution safeguarded the rights of the states, while at the same time allowing the financially - advantageous consolidation of their debts.³ The various meetings formed committees to further the cause, but without the drawcard of a popular speaker activity lapsed until the campaign proper began in mid-May.

¹ Ibid., 1 February 1898.
² Ibid., 29 March 1898.
³ E.B.T., 29 March 1898, N.W.P., 29 March and 7 and 14 April 1898.
There was little evidence of opposition to federation in the North-West and campaigners for a 'No' vote in other parts of the colony kept away from such barren ground; at Wynyard 'two or three' tried to convince graziers of the dangers of unchecked imports of mainland livestock, but the probability of the Meat Tax being repealed regardless of federation prevented this argument from having much effect. The chaos of statistics with which each side sought to prove its case duly appeared in the press but it seems unlikely that more than a handful of electors made much sense of them; more convincing, perhaps, was the case of Newfoundland, much quoted by federationists as an awful warning to small colonies that might consider staying out of unions.

The main task for the campaigners was not therefore to convert opponents, but to ensure that the already-converted went to the poll:

the members of the insignificant minority, who fancy that intercolonial freetrade will tell against their selfish interests, are active and not too scrupulous. A good many electors are careless, and, unless the friends of United Australia are alert, the thoughtless many will be the victims of the interested few. When direct opposition would be futile, the half-hearted will be assured that the result of the poll is certain, and that, therefore, to make any special effort to record a vote would be to waste time and trouble.

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1 N.W.P., 28 May 1898; among them was C.B.M. Fenton, until the previous year one of the two M.H.A.'s for the district (see E.B.T., 31 May 1898).
2 N.W.P., 26 May 1898.
3 Ibid., 14 May 1898.
Most of the federation committees in the North-West were led by town business and professional men, perhaps more because they were traditionally the most active workers for community progress than because federation was in their own interest rather than that of the farmers. The Devonport committee, a branch of the Federation League of Northern Tasmania, arranged for Sir Philip Fysh and F.W. Piesse to tour the coastal towns from Latrobe to Wynyard. Piesse told his audiences that the constitution gave Tasmania adequate representation and was the best they could get, while union would benefit both trade and defence. Fysh spoke on similar lines, seeing finance as the fundamental issue and proving, at least to his audiences' satisfaction, that both the farmer and the Treasury would benefit from federation.

Free trade was the rock on which proponents of federation founded their arguments, but many tried to enliven their addresses by appealing to the patriotic feelings of their audience. In the North-West, where there were many who could still remember the Old Country, if with more nostalgia than clarity, patriotism tended to be as much imperial as Australian. A small branch of the Australian Natives Association was formed at Devonport in November 1897 (an attempt in 1892 had failed), but the Post at least had some misgivings about it; the editor recognised that the native born

1 Ibid., 21 May 1898.
2 E.B.T., 21 May 1898, N.W.P., 26 May 1898.
3 N.W.P., 4 November 1897.
were now greatly in the majority, yet felt that it was stupid to exclude the immigrant, who had done so much for Australia.\textsuperscript{1} Two members of the A.N.A. committee were also on the committee of the local branch of the F.L.N.T., but the A.N.A. as an organisation took no very active part in the campaign. The churches were a more prolific source of national and imperial sentiments, federation receiving favourable notice from the pulpit in many parts of the district on the Sunday before the referendum. Pastor J.F. Walton told the West Devonport Baptists that:

\begin{quote}
A robust independent spirit of pride in their nationality was found amongst Englishmen. They knew their past history and were proud of it. That gave the nation strength. The same characteristic was necessary here.... Pride in one's native place was what was needed to be inculcated in the people here, and he believed that the best way of accomplishing that end was by Federation.... He did not expect that the Commonwealth Bill was going to bring about the millenium, but it was about as near perfect as could be got.\textsuperscript{2}
\end{quote}

Some people argued that federation was necessary for imperial defence. F.W. Piesse was applauded at Ulverstone for pointing out that union would enable them to stand by England if required,\textsuperscript{3} while the Post, after recalling the wonders of the Jubilee, continued:

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{1}] Ibid., 11 November 1897.
\item[\textsuperscript{2}] Ibid., 26 May 1898.
\item[\textsuperscript{3}] Ibid., 21 May 1898.
\end{itemize}
In plain English, John Bull's neighbours, whilst congratulating him on his marvellous display of wealth, may very possibly have been counting the cost of robbing him. At any rate, the months succeeding the memorable fete have been remarkable for hostile utterances and for unfriendly acts.

The struggle foreshadowed by English statesmen may or may not come in the immediate future, but come it probably will sooner or later. There were forty years of peace - that is, of immunity from great wars - between the fall of Napoleon the Great and England's alliance with Napoleon the Small to crush Russia. More than fifty years have passed since news of a great victory won by their countrymen thrilled Englishmen; but the peace will almost certainly end as did that. It would be well for Australia - specially well for Tasmania - if the colonies are united while calm reflection is possible.

This was a stern warning, but it would probably have gone unheeded if federation had been economically distasteful to the farmers. They were happy to hear and applaud panegyrics on empire if these confirmed opinions already formed, but it would have been out of character if they had allowed Anglo-Saxon pride to take precedence over immediate financial interests; doubtless arguments would have been found to show that the empire could be defended just as well without federation. Nonetheless, the path of honour was also that of profit and there was an overwhelming 'Yes' vote at the referendum:

Ibid.
The federation committees did much good work in getting people to the polls, and at Latrobe only about a dozen who could be 'got at' failed to vote, the other non-voters being either absent or ill. At Devonport:

Vehicles drove hither and thither to bring up laggard voters, and, judging from the numerous loads of 'free and independents' who were carted up the hill to the State School, the West Devonport polling place, the efforts of the beaters were not resultless....The vehicles engaged bore various legends calling on people to vote for Federation and free ports in the whole of Australia.2

The 1899 referendum was preceded by a similar if rather shorter campaign led by local politicians and the resuscitated committees; once again there were encouraging words from the pulpit, although both Baptist and Congregational ministers at Devonport felt constrained to point out that righteousness alone could make man perfect.3 The second vote was as decisive as the first:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>For</th>
<th>Against</th>
<th>Enrolled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Devonport</td>
<td>871</td>
<td>29 or 30</td>
<td>1,938</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latrobe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Devon</td>
<td>652</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1,424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellington</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>831</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Ibid., 4 June 1898; Walch, op.cit., 1899, p.121.
2 N.W.P., 4 June 1898.
3 Ibid., 25 July 1899.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>For</th>
<th>Against</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Latrobe</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devonport</td>
<td>647</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Devon</td>
<td>724</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wellington</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>8 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

But if federation was decided more on considerations of finance than patriotism, the Boer War soon gave the forest land settlers a chance to demonstrate their finer feelings. It was an eminently satisfactory war for all save the very few who lost relatives, with just sufficient tragedy to make the taste of victory all the sweeter, and it must have done much to prepare the community for an unquestioning, even eager, acceptance of the holocaust of the First World War. Not, indeed, that many people seemed to think war either wrong or futile even before the South African affair; from time to time there were references to the need to call forth the manly virtues, while the Post advanced a Malthusian theory that war was necessary to avert mass starvation in an over-populated world: 'Instead of being a device of the devil, as in all reason it resembles, it is a dispensation of an all-wise Providence, sent, as a blessing, in disguise'.

1 Ibid., 27 July 1899.
2 Ibid., 2 July 1898.
rather than Gladstone, had been promoted as the ideal of British statesmanship.\(^1\)

The first volunteers were farewelled in October 1899 with balls, bands and large crowds at the railway stations; the festivities at Ulverstone were likened to the eve of Waterloo.\(^2\) Those who stayed at home devoted themselves to raising a patriotic fund and to the persecution of supposed Boer sympathisers. Patriotic gatherings were frequent and generally well supported during the first few months of the war, the usual programme including stirring addresses on flag, Queen and Empire and songs like Soldiers of the Queen, Rule Britannia and the National Anthem. Equally popular were effigy burning and vocal demonstrations outside the homes of any who seemed less than fully enthusiastic in the imperial cause; the larrakin mob had for once found common cause with the respectable townspeople whose bane it had so often been. At Penguin in January 1900 several well-known residents were incautious enough to express pro-Boer sentiments; they were advised to 'go slow for a bit', there having been enquires for tar 'perhaps for bonfires, perhaps not'.\(^3\) At Latrobe the effigy of a Boer sympathiser was burnt in front of his house while a crowd of 200 sang the National Anthem.\(^4\) The earlier victories were celebrated with much

\(^1\) W.T., 4 February 1893.

\(^2\) N.W.P., 21 October 1899.

\(^3\) Ibid., 16 January 1900.

\(^4\) Ibid., 1 February 1900.
enthusiasm; at Forth two unlucky infants were christened Mafeking Pretoria Smith and Baden-Powell Vertigan. As the campaign dragged on, however, excitement tended to wane, although there was always a warm welcome for returning soldiers. By November 1901 the Post was sufficiently disenchanted with the war to question a British request for more Australian troops; Australia's sons would do better to stay at home and develop their own country, rather than to sacrifice their lives to enteric fever and Boer snipers.

The birth of the Commonwealth of Australia was celebrated with an enthusiasm worthy of Mafeking Night, but the gloss soon wore off the new national government in the face of political realities. The first election in March 1901 was a confusing affair with ill-defined issues and, because Tasmania voted for both Houses as a single electorate, an apparently endless procession of campaigning candidates; Henry Dobson congratulated the 200 Devonport people who turned out to hear him 'as they must have had a big federal dose lately'. The form the new commonwealth tariff should take occupied a major part of most addresses, while there were frequent references also to female suffrage, old-age pensions and White Australia; most candidates were guardedly in favour of these secondary planks. Among the electors

1 Ibid., 5 June 1900.
2 Ibid., 23 November 1901.
3 Ibid., 16 March 1901.
the freetraders (most of whom were in fact revenue tariff men) made their presence felt more than did the protectionists; Sir Philip Fysh's Devonport meeting ended in uproar when he announced himself a supporter of Barton and protection,\(^1\) while at Ulverstone a large meeting addressed by John Henry launched a branch of the Australian Freetrade and Liberal Association with considerable enthusiasm.\(^2\)

At the polls the district followed tradition and voted for men rather than policies. Braddon, a freetrader, polled far better than anyone else in Latrobe, Devonport and West Devon, although he might not have done so well if John Henry had decided to stand. In Wellington, however, C.B.M. Fenton, a local man but a protectionist, led the field with 237 votes to Braddon's 125, F.W. Piesse coming a very poor third with 26. The Senate results were similar, Henry Murray, a revenue tariff man, doing particularly well in his old home district of Latrobe. In Wellington William Moore, a protectionist, received a 'favourite son' vote of 275 to his nearest opponent's 26. Equally typical of the parochial politics of the North-West was the fact that in West Devon Murray polled 163 votes to Moore's 32, while in Wellington Murray had only 14 to Moore's 275.\(^3\)

By the next general election federal politics had become a little clearer. Tasmania was now divided into

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1 Ibid., 12 March 1901.
2 Ibid., 14 March 1901.
3 Ibid., 26, 28 and 30 March, 2 and 4 April 1901.
five House of Representatives electorates, one of which, Darwin, joined the North-West farming communities from the Forth westwards to Cape Grim in an uneasy union with the West Coast miners; the Devonport, Latrobe, Wilmot and Kentish districts were included in Wilmot, an essentially agricultural electorate extending eastwards to Launceston.¹ The main issues, too, were better defined by 1903, with customs tariffs, 'socialistic' legislation and the 'excessive' cost of federal government very much to the fore. Tours by Barton, Reid and Lyne between February and May 1903 suggested that the North-West was less unanimously in favour of Australian than it had been of inter-colonial free trade. Barton wisely defended protection on the ground that customs revenue was necessary to avoid direct taxation (there was growing uneasiness about 'socialistic' land taxes), rather than because it propped up uneconomic industries, which might make the farmer pay more for his equipment and he was generally applauded by a large audience at Devonport, although John Henry spoke up for free trade.² Lyne, however, provoked frequent interjections, laughter and uproar, if mingled with some applause, when he told his Ulverstone audience that protection was necessary to develop manufacturing and make the country self-sufficient in case of war; Thomas Collett, in moving a vote of thanks, aroused further loud dissent and uproar by insisting that nine-tenths of the electors in the North-West favoured moderate

¹ Walch, op.cit., 1909, map in front of volume.
² N.W.P., 19 February 1903.
protection, and 'Mr Lyne could feel assured that the policy of the Barton Government was favoured by the majority!'.

The division between freetraders (or revenue tariffers) and protectionists was not very clearly defined, but the wealthier landowners and businessmen tended towards the former because protection and its necessary complement of direct federal taxation were identified with that arch-enemy of property, socialism; thus the conservative Post was staunchly free trade, where as the Advocate, which sold also among the Burnie and West Coast labourers, tended towards protection. The free trade cause was probably helped by a carry-over of the strong anti-protection feeling from the days of inter-colonial tariffs; the warm reception of G.H. Reid's free trade speech at Devonport in 1903 seems to have been encouraged by grateful memories of his opposition to that nightmare of the Tasmanian farmer, a high New South Wales tariff. But not all farmers in the North-West were freetraders. Thomas Hogarth, of Burnie, was convinced that protection would have a beneficial effect on Australian agriculture:

The binder business...is an instance of what we suffer; for the binder the maker gets £15, the American farmer pays £18....We pay net cash £47 10s. in Victoria, the farmer pays £55....everything we import is charged in a similar way; I paid...5s. 6d. yesterday for a 3½lb. axe. Will any man of common sense observation look at that axe and assert that

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1 Ibid., 14 May 1903.
2 Ibid., 5 May 1903.
the maker got more than ls. 10d. for it. Freetraders have a wonderful fancy for multiplying by three; there are always three or more of them in it.¹

The Wilmot elections of December 1903 and February 1904 gave the agricultural interest an opportunity to record its views on the tariff question. In December Braddon, standing on free trade and anti-socialism,² was opposed by John Cheek, a protectionist in whose cause Alfred Deakin spoke at Devonport.³ Braddon won by 3,313 votes to 2,723,⁴ a victory over a candidate 'totally unknown and unexperienced'⁵ sufficiently narrow to suggest a strong protectionist vote. Within two months, however, Braddon was dead and his seat was contested by Cheek and a revenue tariff landowner from the Deloraine district, Norman Cameron; the town candidate and the farmers' candidate the Post called them.⁶ Now socialism as well as tariffs was a crucial issue. Cheek not only proposed duties to keep New Zealand potatoes out of the Sydney market, but also approved the arbitration bill and old-age pensions, and, even more dangerous, spoke well of that embodiment of all that was dangerous in socialism, King O'Malley;

¹ Agricultural Gazette, April 1901, p.222.
² N.W.P., 24 November 1903.
³ Ibid., 15 December 1903.
⁴ Ibid., 26 December 1903.
⁵ Ibid., 22 December 1903.
⁶ Ibid., 23 February 1904.
morally he was on more conservative ground by opposing divorce law reform and favourably noticing temperance. Norman Cameron followed the Braddon line of revenue tariff (Tasmanian potatoes could outsell New Zealand without the help of a duty) and opposition to Labor 'dictation' to the federal government; the importance of the socialist issue was underlined by the withdrawal of a third candidate to allow Cameron a monopoly of the anti-Labor vote. The result of the poll (a very low one, only 4,551 of 15,742 enrolled casting formal votes) showed that in the North-West at least freetrade and anti-socialism now, it is probable, inextricably linked in many minds, were considerably in the ascendancy:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Devonport</th>
<th>Sheffield</th>
<th>Deloraine</th>
<th>All Central North</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cameron</td>
<td>751</td>
<td>398</td>
<td>451</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheek</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>424</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The seat was narrowly won by Cameron, who received 2,368 votes to Cheek's 2,183.

It was in Darwin, however, that the forest land farmers were first confronted by a socialist politician, a spectacle all the more alarming because that politician was King O'Malley. There had been, it is true, faint socialist stirrings during the preceding 15 years,

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1 Ibid.
2 Ibid., 25 February 1904.
3 Ibid., 18 February 1904.
4 Ibid., 1 March 1904.
5 Ibid.
significantly in the towns rather than the country. Shop assistants' half-holiday associations had gradually gained their objective from the late eighties onwards, while at Devonport in September 1890 a newly-formed Wharf Labourers Union actually refused to work a ship manned by non-unionists; the strike was quickly broken, many employers in the town offering their workmen's services:

The full complement of [non-union] laborers were working, and many more standing by ready to take their coats off and start, had they been called upon. We are informed that any amount of free labor was available, sufficient, in fact to work two or three large vessels.¹

After this defeat the union passed from public notice until early in 1897 when it was revived to fight for 1s 0d an hour for the first eight hours of a day, and 1s 6d thereafter, with time off for meals and 'smoke-ohs'; by March 60 members were enrolled, some no doubt attracted by an accident fund which would pay 10s 0d per week in return for a 6d per week contribution.² Isolation, long hours and a belief that emigration to the West Coast was a surer way of getting higher wages than striking seem to have discouraged unionism among rural workers, although there was some talk of combination at Sheffield in January 1899 to fight for 1s 0d instead of 6d per hour.³

¹ Ibid., 16 September 1890.
² Ibid., 23 February and 4 March 1897.
³ Ibid., 14 January 1899.
Darwin was split almost equally between the farmers of the North-West and the miners of the West Coast, so that it was natural that O'Malley, then the miners' political hero, should contest the seat in the 1903 general election. He did little to sugar the pill of socialism for his agricultural audiences, indeed at Sprent he invited one interjector to come outside and fight (the challenge was accepted, but O'Malley later managed to evade it). O'Malley won the seat thanks to an overwhelming lead over Brickhill, his anti-socialist opponent, in Lyell, Strahan and Zeehan; in the North-West the vote went equally strongly the other way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ulverstone</th>
<th>Penguin</th>
<th>Burnie</th>
<th>Wynyard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brickhill</td>
<td>798</td>
<td>459</td>
<td>830</td>
<td>498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O'Malley</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first impression of straight farmer versus labourer vote is, however, complicated by the 268-235 vote for Brickhill at Waratah, a mining town, but one which was linked socially and economically more with the North-West than the West Coast; this suggested that many labourers voted anti-socialist in a district which did not look upon O'Malley as a 'favourite son'.

The success of Labor in the 1903 elections did nothing to calm a growing mistrust of federal politics as a whole in the North-West. The Post was disturbed in November 1904 by the High Court ruling that federal

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1 ADV. and N.W.P., 21 November 1903.
2 ADV., 18 December 1903.
ministers and servants should be exempt from certain state taxes:

Federation has been disappointing from its inception; the only persons who have benefited are the Federal officers, and, if the states are to be put to further expense and the necessity of new taxation put forward, the, the Federal employees may as well have the country to themselves, for every fresh absurdity shakes public confidence in the Commonwealth and results in a curtailment of industry and enterprise.¹

From 1903 onwards the conservatives came increasingly to regard not protection, but federal extravagances, above all those such as a minimum wage and old-age pensions which were part of socialist doctrine, as the most dangerous characteristic of national politics; thus freetraders and protectionists were urged to bury their differences and unite against the much greater evil of socialism, as well as such extravagant 'fads' as a new national capital and the trans-continental railway.²

Such opposition to socialism was in part ideological, for many who professed themselves willing to concede 'reasonable' demands for higher wages and social justice nevertheless felt that the working class was getting out of hand; why, asked the Post, should the employer be bound to obey the Arbitration Court and the worker not?³ But it was essentially a question of money. Land nationalisation by punitive taxation now

¹ N.W.P., 12 November 1904.
² Ibid., 27 May 1905.
³ Ibid., 23 February 1904.
seemed to be worrying more people than it had done in the 1890s and King O'Malley's expressed desire to 'ring-bark the "cockies"' did nothing to endear the Labor party to the larger farmer. Some even suspected White Australia to be a socialist device which would make Australia pay more for sugar and encourage the Japanese to boycott Tasmanian jam; of all 'socialist' policies, however, White Australia was the least unpopular, indeed N.K. Ewing, a Senate candidate in 1906, was cheered alike at Ulverstone for opposing socialism and supporting White Australia. A.K. McGaw found in 1904 that 'There is an insane hatred in this Colony of everybody that is not "white"'.

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1 This threat was contained in a speech made in November 1903 at the West Coast mining town of Gormanston, in which the Advocate of 9 November 1903 claimed that O'Malley said:
The 'cockies' were trying to oust him, even after he had been instrumental in getting £1 a ton duty placed upon potatoes to prevent New Zealand flooding the Australian markets. That was gratitude; but he would ring-bark the 'cockies' yet. Back to the Federal Parliament he would go without their vote, and then farewell to the £1 a ton duty on potatoes, for 'up would go M'Ginty's cart'. The Federal Labor Party would watch the unearned increment in the next Parliament, and by the Lord Harry, the boodlers' estates would be cut up so that young men could settle on the land and marry some of the splendid women going to waste in the back blocks.

Three years later O'Malley denied having made the threat. (see ADV., 28 November 1906).

3 Ibid., 12 January 1905.
4 Ibid., 22 October 1900.
5 V.D.L.P., O.D. 78, 1 August 1904.
A Railton socialist tried to dispel conservative fears by emphasising that the socialist creed was nationalisation (but not of land), co-operation and equality, not free love, atheism, equal pay for all and communism, but many must have found the milder version disturbing enough, for there were considerable efforts to mobilise anti-Labor feeling in the North-West in 1904-5. Branches of the Tasmanian National Association were set up in the larger towns, membership at Devonport being swelled by amalgamation with the local branch of the Tasmanian Womens' Political Association, which body, having recently gained its first objective of female suffrage, was now concerning itself with the evils of socialism; White Australia would make sugar dearer, while an eight hour day was clearly impracticable for domestic servants.

The National Associations made a formidable array of rank and property; the Burnie committee included the chairman of the Town Board, an Anglican clergyman, the manager of the V.D.L. Company, the proprietor of the local newspaper, a solicitor, a publican, shopkeepers and businessmen. Yet, like most political groups they seemed to spend much of their time preaching to the

1 N.W.P., 7 March and 11 April 1905.  
2 Ibid., 29 August 1905.  
3 Ibid., 26 June 1904.  
converted. It was of little use Henry Dumbleton, Assembly member for Devonport, telling his local branch that:

He though they were heartily sick of industrial legislation. The whole of the last session of the Federal Parliament had been devoted to it. It seemed as if everything else in Australia could slide as long as the chief party got preference to unionists and arbitration, if the audience was composed of convinced anti-socialists. In any case if the socialists were as little interested in hearing the other side's viewpoint as the conservatives then the National Association can have achieved little; the Devonport women's branch of the Association invited a socialist to expound his faith to them, but only eleven ladies and nine gentlemen came to hear him.2

The socialists too began to tighten their ranks, although at Devonport:

One has only to go to the wharf on a Friday afternoon to see that there is no lack of workers here, but, as regards political activity, they might be nonexistent..., in view of the existence of a 'powerful' local branch of the National Association they were urged to organise.3 In October 1906 a branch of the Workers' Political League was formed in the town and, as mentioned below, the movement gradually spread through the district.4

1 N.W.P., 27 May 1906.
2 Ibid., 6 October 1906.
3 Ibid., 30 May 1905.
4 Ibid., 19 October 1906.
The 1906 federal election was in the North-West fought above all else on the issue of socialism. There were four candidates for the Wilmot seat, two of them conservatives, one a liberal protectionist and the fourth a member of the Labor party. For the conservatives, Llewelyn Atkinson, a Latrobe solicitor, wanted the fiscal issue settled and an anti-socialist front formed to stop the federal government wasting further time on 'narrow, experimental and unnecessary' legislation and to forestall a federal land tax; he did, however, admit that there was some justice in the less extreme socialist policies, such as the regulation (but not nationalisation) of monopolies.\footnote{Ibid., 1 November 1906.} Norman Cameron, the retiring member, stuck to his old policy of revenue tariff, although he too denounced socialism and pointed out that if the large landowners were forced out then the small farmer would have to pay the taxes.\footnote{Ibid., 21 November 1906.}

Charles Fenton, Table Cape farmer and sometime member for Wellington in the Assembly tried to attract a 'middle of the road' vote by expressing sympathy with the working man and condemning those who fought elections by raising the bogey of socialism. He favoured protection (save for such essentials as tea and kerosene which could not be produced in Australia), White Australia, old-age pensions and state (but not federal) land taxes; for those concerned with federal extravagances he argued that national armed services and a new capital city were too expensive, and that the
trans-continental railway should be paid for by the states concerned.¹

Wilson, the Labor candidate, must have realised that his only chance of success in an agricultural electorate lay in winning over the small farmer as well as the labourer, for he tried to convince the former that Labor's progressive land tax, by breaking up the antique pastoral system, would give the land to the poorer man and that high tariffs were necessary to create a large industrial work force to buy the farmer's produce.²

Llewelyn Atkinson, supported by the National Association, won the seat comfortably, in spite of having to share the conservative vote with Cameron. Wilson came second and Fenton, significantly, a very poor fourth, suggesting that the cleavage between conservative and socialist was too wide for a liberal to bridge. The figures for the Latrobe district were typical:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Latrobe</th>
<th>Harford</th>
<th>New Ground</th>
<th>Sassafras</th>
<th>Wesley Vale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Atkinson</td>
<td>437</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameron</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fenton</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Ibid., 13 July 1906.
² Ibid., 1 December 1906.
³ Ibid., 13 December 1906.
In Darwin socialism was made all the more the bruning issue by the electioneering tactics of King O'Malley, whose near-riotous meetings attracted some of the biggest audience ever seen in the North-West, many people coming to gaze, as upon a snake, with a mixture of fascination and loathing. Remembering, perhaps, his experience at Sprent in 1903, O'Malley now threatened to sue rather than fight interjectors, but his forceful expositions of socialism were otherwise hardly calculated to win over the doubtful, although he did try to convince the farmers that the federal land tax as proposed would not affect 16 estates in Tasmania.  

Of the other two candidates William Lamerton was not only strongly anti-socialist, but also a champion of states rights; he promised to fight reckless federal spending, all direct federal taxation and see that Tasmania was given her fair share of customs revenue. H.E. Banister also stood as an anti-socialist, although he was both a 'moderate' protectionist and a supporter of such socialist measures as old-age pensions (for the deserving) and White Australia.

O'Malley had once again the overwhelming support of the West Coast miners and retained his seat with a majority over the combined vote of his two opponents. In the North-West the poll was significant not only for the rout of the 'liberal', Banister, but also for the

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1 ADV., 28 November 1906.
2 N.W.P., 27 September 1906.
3 Ibid., 15 October 1906.
number of people who voted for O'Malley. In the Burnie district he actually led the field:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Votes Cast</th>
<th>Informal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>O'Malley</td>
<td>460</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lamerton</td>
<td>86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banister</td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total votes cast: 633
Enrolled: 1,987

The large number of railway and port workers in the town itself made the Burnie poll somewhat atypical but even in such essentially agricultural districts as Wynyard the vote was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Votes Cast</th>
<th>Informal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lamerton</td>
<td>336</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O'Malley</td>
<td>235</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banister</td>
<td>84</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total votes cast: 605
Enrolled: 1,496

and at Ulverstone:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Votes Cast</th>
<th>Informal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lamerton</td>
<td>639</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O'Malley</td>
<td>207</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banister</td>
<td>105</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total votes cast: 1,000
Enrolled: 2,179

A.K. McGaw, in regretting O'Malley's election, remarked:

There was however no strong opponent and with a split vote against Labour a good number of North West Coast voters did not consider it worth while to go to the poll. I brought all the Woolnorth hands with me to vote at Montague: they all voted against O'Malley and I believe most of our employees did except perhaps our Burnie building and mill hands.²

1 ADV., 13 and 14 December 1906.
The very low poll in 1906 makes it difficult to estimate accurately the strength of Labor support in the North-West, but there seems little doubt that it was growing. By 1908 branches of the Workers Political League were being set up in purely agricultural districts; at Riana about one-third of the 80 or 90 people present at a meeting in April of that year decided to join the newly-established local branch, after being assured that the farmer had nothing to fear from Labor. ¹ By contrast the National Association collapsed after 1906; McGaw wrote in April 1909:

If the anti labour party vote solidly for their three candidates [in the House of Assembly elections] they will be returned...but the party is entirely unorganised and so many voters who should know better express openly a preference for labour men. ²

McGaw was confident that the majority of the Company's employees would vote against Labor, but before the next federal election he was forced to admit:

There is so much apathy amongst the anti-Labour electors of Darwin that it is very doubtful if Mr. Fisher will win the seat. Many small farmers on this Coast are strong supporters of the Labour Party and the Labour vote is usually a very solid one. ³

¹ N.W.P., 28 April 1908.
³ Ibid., O.D. 450, 23 March 1910.
The new state parliament spent much time in its early years attempting to reorganize taxation. In 1900 Tasmania had raised more than two-thirds of her tax-derived revenue from the customs, the rest coming from taxes of \( \frac{1}{2}d \) in £1 on the capital value of land and 1s 0d in £1 on the income and dividends of companies,\(^1\) so that the Braddon blot notwithstanding, there was a substantial deficiency to be made up after federation either by retrenchment or an increase in direct taxation.

In spite of the *North-West Post*‘s assertion that it was for the government to devise taxation and for the people to sanction or reject it\(^2\) the question was decided within rather than outside parliament. In 1902 the Lewis ministry persuaded both Houses to accept a new land tax graduated from \( \frac{1}{2}d \) in £1 on estates valued less than £5,000 to 1d in £1 for those worth £80,000 or more, as well as an income tax of 1s 0d in £1.\(^3\) These were resented by rich and poor alike and helped to bring down the government in the 1903 general election. The new 'Reform' ministry under W.B. Propsting promised to repeal the tax on income gained from personal exertion, but was thwarted in this by the Legislative Council, which insisted that the poorer citizen, now less burdened by customs duties, should contribute to the revenue in some other way.\(^4\) The Council refused, however, to make

\(^1\) Walch, op.cit., 1901, p.253.
\(^2\) *N.W.P.*, 10 March 1904.
\(^3\) Walch, op.cit., 1903, p.238.
\(^4\) *N.W.P.*, 9 January 1904.
the wealthy pay any more and rejected a bill to increase the land tax. Realising the unpopularity of the income tax Propsting tried to replace it with one on the occupiers of houses,1 but this too was thrown out by the Council and the ministry resigned in July 1904.

The new Premier, Captain John Evans, succeeded in getting the Occupancy Tax through both houses, while pacifying the conservatives by renewing the income tax on personal exertion:

The working classes - generally so called - have to pay as well as the professional, agricultural and manufacturing divisions, which is as it should be.2

But there was little else in the trend of Tasmanian politics to cheer the wealthy. By 1907 people in the state were paying 27s 0d per head in direct taxation, more than anyone else in the Commonwealth,3 and even so the government was spending much less on works than the progressives would have liked. One Devonport man in 1906 urged the people to:

burst up the rest-and-be-thankful policy of Ministers....The parrot cry 'There is no money' must be refuted until it is no longer heard. Tasmania is teeming with money, so much so that the banks will only offer 2 and 2½ per cent, and the Government could absorb a portion of this without going to the wealthier States or the London market.4

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1 Ibid., 14 May 1904.
2 Ibid., 27 August 1904.
3 Ibid., 30 April 1907.
4 Ibid., 27 June 1906.
By 1909 the Advocate was openly commending socialist policies:

Every man or woman who takes no interest in the political situation is indirectly chargeable with the glaring evils, anomalies and inequalities which render Tasmania a good place to flee from - judging by the many thousands of our manhood who are living beyond our shores.... This is surely a damning indictment of the antiquated methods which have prevailed in this island, where no Labor or other 'fancy' legislation has ever secured a place on the statute book.1

Even the Post, now under more liberal management, condemned the 'severe parsimony'2 of the government's works spending and ridiculed the Premier's indignation at Western Australian attempts to recruit settlers in Tasmania:

Captain Evans should be indignant with himself, and with his own weak and foolish land policy, which is such a feeble thing that it cannot, with all the climatic and natural advantages possessed by this State compete with the friendly opposition of West Australia.

the government spent much time and money on speeches and promises of encouraging settlers, but then published statistics:

showing that the encouragement is so successful that the agricultural population is steadily and continuously drifting to other parts of the Commonwealth and New Zealand....It further encourages settlement by asking the would-be settler to go into the bush and wait twenty or

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1 ADV., 30 April 1909.
2 N.W.P., 5 July 1907.
thirty years for a road or track....It encourages settlement by having roads in the vicinity of populous market centres in such a condition that, at the busiest part of the agricultural year, the settler is shut in by miles of mud and slush.¹

In 1908 the Post went so far as to suggest a tax on the unimproved capital value of land:

Land is scarce, what is offering is hard to get at, and when the selector has grown his crop he has either to cart it long distances - which is unprofitable - or feed it to his pigs, his horses or his cattle - which is also unprofitable...the Government shows its sympathy by raising his assessment, and taxing him on his life's work. On the other hand the speculator who buys up land and fails to use it gets off lightly, benefits from the improvements made by his neighbours, and allows his land to harbour vermin, and grow pests that the other man has to pay to exterminate.²

The government deferred to the progressives by introducing legislation for the compulsory purchase of private land for closer settlement and for a re-assessment of land values which threatened to make the large landowner pay higher taxes; both were thrown out by the Council, but as A.K. McGaw remarked:

The present Evans Ministry is looked upon as a conservative Ministry and it shows the trend of legislation generally when we find them so keenly pressing such measures on Parliament. ³

¹ Ibid., 6 March 1908.
² Ibid., 17 July 1908.
³ V.D.L.P., O.D. 350, 12 September 1908.
Evans retired in 1909 and Sir Elliot Lewis took office again, leading a ministry which was conservative, in that it was an alliance of anti-socialists, but which soon justified McGaw's misgivings. A 25 per cent surcharge was immediately added to all land tax assessments, the tax on dividends, company and personal incomes raised to 1s 3d in £1 and, in 1910, the existing land tax replaced by a new one based on the unimproved capital value of the estate; the land tax was graduated from 1d in £1 on estates valued at less than £2,500 to 2½d in £1 on those worth £80,000 or more. This, indeed, was a triumph for the progressives.

Federation, a very substantial increase in direct taxation and the rise of the Labor party from near obscurity to a strength sufficient to form a state government (albeit short-lived) in 1909 made the first decade of the new century one of the most eventful yet known in Tasmanian politics. It remains to consider the attitude of an agricultural community to such rapid and substantial changes.

In August 1901 the Mersey Legislative Council electors representing, it may be supposed, the more conservative element, were offered a fairly clear choice of policy. John Henry told them that there was no need to be hysterical about the financial consequences of federation, for Tasmania was just as prosperous as before;

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1 Walch, op.cit., 1910, p.227 and 1911, p.419.
he therefore suggested that useful public works be
carried out and paid for by increased direct taxation.¹
Henry Murray, however, urged extreme caution in
government spending and opposed the imposition of
either income or higher land taxes.² John Henry won
the seat by 337 votes to 267, but if the electors
followed tradition his victory was probably due as much
to personal popularity as to his progressive policies.
And that parochial issues still swayed many electors
was shown by the 69-28 vote against Henry at Ulverstone,
where the locals were upset by his refusal to press for
government money to improve the redundant Leven harbour.³

Apart from occasional public meetings held to
denounce the income tax and urge the government to build
new roads and railways, the only political issue in
which the electorate took any active interest was
parliamentary reform, which for most people meant a
reduction in the size and cost of the state parliament
and, for a few politically-active women, the securing
of the franchise for their sex.

The gradual extension of the franchise to all adult
males, completed in 1900, aroused few passions in the
North-West, indeed the conservatives had used the apathy
with which previous concessions had been greeted as an
argument against further reform:

¹ N.W.P., 13 August 1901.
² Ibid., 10 August 1901.
³ Ibid., 20 August 1901.
In the ranks of 'pruperty' there may be crass ignorance, but the responsibility which is felt by those having a substantial stake in the country impels them to use what intelligence they have in carefully thinking out the problems of government. No such responsibility rests upon the man who only claims the franchise from having resided in the Colony for a few months and having earned £40 during the twelve months immediately preceding the sending in of his claim. That the masses as a whole do not take the slightest interest in the affairs of the State we have proof indisputable in the difficulty experienced last year [1894] in endeavouring to induce them to send in their claims to vote....

That such an opinion was not based solely on prejudice is born out not only by the fact that as late as March 1901 only 1,065 of 1,402 adult males were enrolled in Wellington and 606 of 857 in Latrobe, but also by the frequently very low vote in elections between 1900 and 1910.

Women alone made any real effort to secure the vote, perhaps out of outrage at the cant delivered on the subject by men. The Post thought it was all a Labor device to gain voters, for no respectable (i.e. anti-socialist) woman would deign to meddle in politics, but the alacrity with which the Devonport branch of the Tasmanian Women's Suffrage Association merged with the

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1 Ibid., 4 June 1895.
3 N.W.P., 22 November 1902.
anti-socialist National Association once its object had been achieved suggested that some women wanted the vote to use against the Labor party rather than for it; that the Suffrage Association's Devonport president was a doctor's wife and that an Anglican clergyman was among its speakers is further evidence of its 'respectability'.

The only political movement to arouse any semblance of popular support in the North-West was the Tasmanian Reform League's campaign to reduce the size and cost of the post-federation state parliament; increased direct taxation had heightened the enthusiasm of the farmer and small town businessman for retrenchment among city idlers. Branches of the League were formed in the larger towns between May and July 1902, although some of the meetings were only moderately attended. The object of the movement was to lower the cost of government wherever possible by retrenchment in the administration and by reducing the House of Assembly to 20, and the Legislative Council to ten members; the people had been told that federation would reduce the state parliaments to 'little more than glorified boards of works' and the League was determined to overcome the vested interests of politicians and public servants.

John Henry's retirement through ill-health caused a by-election for the Mersey seat in the Council in July 1902 and gave the electorate a chance to express an opinion on the League's policy. Of the three

1 Ibid., 3, 6 and 8 May 1902.
2 Ibid., 25 May 1899.
candidates William Innes, formerly a sea captain but now a ferry owner and investor at Devonport, had a conservatively-tinged 'something for everybody' platform which demanded retrenchment sufficient to avoid new taxes, but not so severe as to frighten away capitalists; he would not favour a smaller parliament if this increased the power of the towns over the country and he wanted the present system of small single-member electorates (in which the member should reside) to continue. C.J. Hall, a solicitor, honestly opposed reform; any reduction in membership would favour the towns, while party government (which the League wanted to abolish) was necessary for the good of the state. The third candidate, H.A. Nichols, combined expressions of support for the League with some skill in evading definite commitment to all its planks, and won the seat comfortably. But not everyone saw in Nichols' popularity support for the reformers: the high priest of the Ulverstone parish pump opposes the candidature of Mr. Hall professedly on the grounds of his not being in accord with the programme of the Reform League, but really because he will not sell his political soul by the advocacy of an unprofitable and unbusiness-like expenditure on the Leven Harbor.

1 Ibid., 8 June 1902.
2 Ibid., 5 July 1902.
3 Ibid., 10 July 1902.
4 Ibid., 19 July 1902.
5 Ibid., 15 July 1902.
Nichols, who had spoken favourably of the proposed harbour improvements, gained such an overwhelming lead in the Ulverstone district that he was able to beat Hall, who was generally the most popular candidate elsewhere; Innes picked up a 'favourite son' vote at West Devonport and Nook, but elsewhere did badly.

The Reform League's proposals were rejected by parliament in 1902 and the movement soon collapsed in the North-West; the usual difficulties found in keeping any organisation alive once the first flush of enthusiasm had worn off were probably aggravated by conservative fears that any reform would strengthen the towns and the socialists. In 1904 the Post praised 'the Upper House, which has again and again relieved the country of the burden of hasty and ill-advised legislation' and A.K. McGaw agreed that:

There is no doubt that the Upper House has been so far the salvation of Tasmania. It is just a question how long the present conservative element in the Upper House can maintain its ascendancy.

In the 1903 state election campaign the specific objects of the Reform League had become absorbed in the traditional and all-embracing cry of retrenchment. The election for the new Assembly seat of Kentish was typical. Llewelyn Atkinson, the Latrobe solicitor whose later entry into federal politics has been mentioned above, supported the League's policy, but added to it

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1 Ibid., 6 November 1902.
the usual attack on the 'drones' in the public service and promises of retrenchment sufficient not only to avoid new taxes, but also to provide funds for building a railway for Kentish.\textsuperscript{1} Atkinson was opposed by John Hope, a Scots pioneer farmer, also a staunch advocate of the railway, but one who was bold enough to tell the electors that if they wanted public works, they must be prepared to pay for them by taxation.\textsuperscript{2} The railway was obviously the leading political issue in the minds of the voters and since both candidates favoured it the election was decided on personal popularity; Hope won the seat comfortably thanks to very strong support in his home district of Sheffield.\textsuperscript{3}

Yet this was the twilight of the ultra-personal and parochial wrangles which had been the stuff of politics in the North-West for so many years. Only two seats (Devonport and Burnie) were contested in the 1906 general election, and here the emphasis was on such broader questions as the 'democratization' of the Legislative Council, the redistribution of its seats, forms of new taxation, closer settlement and local option.\textsuperscript{4} In 1907 parliament at last accepted some measure of reform and the old single member Assembly seats were abolished, the state henceforward returning five Assembly members for each of the five federal

\textsuperscript{1} N.W.P., 10 March 1903.
\textsuperscript{2} Ibid., 14 March 1903.
\textsuperscript{3} Ibid., 4 April 1903.
\textsuperscript{4} Ibid., 26 and 30 March 1906.
electorates. By the 1909 elections politicians were grouping themselves into clearly-defined Labor and anti-Labor parties and a new period in Tasmanian politics had begun. But the foundations of state Labor strength in the North-West had been laid already. Typical of the change in attitude towards the party and of the wider background from which it was now drawing support, was the Advocate's commendation of one of the Labor candidates for Darwin at the 1909 state election:

Mr. J. Belton has served a full term as Warden of Table Cape, and has shown himself to be a man of ability and tact. As a settlers representative he should make a sterling member, for he has actively identified himself with the great want of our new districts - the need of road outlets.1

Among the first reforms to be debated by the new state parliament was a long-overdue re-organisation of local government. In the country areas of the North-West the road trusts remained the most important local authorities and by 1906 there were 15 of them,2 parochial squabbles having encouraged a gradual subdivision of the districts. The trusts were still subject to internal dissension3 and from time to time they fought with each other over 'frontier' works4 and

1 ADV., 29 April 1909.
2 Walch, op.cit., 1907, pp.7-8.
3 See references to the affairs of the Leven road trust in N.W.P. 8 and 15 April 1902.
4 N.W.P., 3 March 1904.
with the Public Works Department over the administration of government votes for road construction, but on the whole they seem to have been working fairly efficiently by the beginning of the new century. Less satisfactory, because of their very limited powers and funds, were the boards of health, school boards of advice and fruit boards, which had been set up towards the end of the nineteenth century. The boards of health were restricted by their income (gained from dairy licenses) to the remedy of minor abuses and even here they could not always be relied upon; the Penguin board sent the government a bill for burying a dead animal in 1894 and when told to recover the money from license fees the members resigned en masse, while in 1900 the Ulverstone board was too impoverished even to destroy rats.

Giving up their hopes of the surrounding farming communities joining them in municipalities, the larger towns had gradually established town boards under the act of 1884. The boards were formed for precisely the reason that the farmers disliked the idea of union with the towns, namely the levying of higher rates for urban improvements such as streets and pavements and the provision of drains, water, sewers and, latterly, electric light; by 1906 Devonport people were paying

1 Ibid., 5 and 24 September and 26 October 1901.
3 N.W.P., 21 June 1900.
4 Town Boards Act, 48 Vic., No.7.
rates of 1s 0d for roads, 1s 6d for water, 3d for light and 2d for general town services on the annual value of their properties and those with land near the centre of the town an additional special rate of 1/6 of one penny on its capital value.¹ The boards eventually carried out most of the tasks for which they had been appointed, but their efficiency was reduced by internal bickerings and timidity in spending. The Burnie board split into pro- and anti-Van Diemen's Land Company factions and nearly every meeting was 'disgraced by the introduction of private quarrels & jealousies',² while at Devonport the Post complained that:

Annually the town fritters away some £400 (exclusive of salaries to overseer and sub-overseer) in tinkering at the roads and footpaths, and yet, it will be admitted, there is not a yard of decent footpaths even in the heart of the town. The sum stated would pay interest and provide 1 per cent of sinking fund on a loan of £8,000, which, if judiciously expended, would give us a considerable stretch of footpaths that could be traversed with comfort, and roads that would not require everlasting attention.³

Such deficiencies were both cause and effect of the disinclination of many town people to serve on the boards; the Post at the time of the 1897 election at Devonport expressed a hope that:

¹ Walch, op.cit., 1907, pp.372-3.
² V.D.L.P., O.D. 703, 13 August 1898.
³ N.W.P., 20 March 1897.
If the ratepayers have not become too utterly disenchanted by previous failures in this direction, they will make at least one more effort to secure eligible men - men of known business capacity....

But competent men could better occupy their time in their own business or profession and at election after election the same quarrelsome and loquacious mediocrities were returned by the usually small number of electors who bothered to vote.

The Local Government Act of 1906 was the first substantial reform of local administration in Tasmania since before 1856. It divided the whole island into 51 municipalities, whose councils, elected by the ratepayers, took over the duties of all the old nominated and elected boards and trusts. In the North-West the change was at first regarded with some suspicion, the farmers fearing that their rates would be squandered on urban luxuries and the townspeople that the management of town affairs would be beyond the competence of rural councillors; 781 of the 917 ratepayers of Devonport petitioned against the extension of the old town board boundaries to form a municipality, while the town members of the new Emu Bay council, by a manoeuvre of doubtful honestly, elected themselves a sub-committee to manage the affairs of Burnie. But

1 Ibid.
2 6 Edward VII., No.31.
3 N.W.P., 15 October 1907.
4 Ibid., 20 February 1908.
misgivings about the new system were soon tempered with satisfaction at the larger income which it brought, and there were few complaints after 1908; in February 1909 a public meeting at Devonport rejected by 34 votes to 20 a suggestion that the area of the municipality be reduced, supporters of the existing boundaries arguing that it would be foolish to loose control of the main roads into the town and of land on which suburbs might be built one day.


2 ADV., 10 February 1909.
CHAPTER 7

THE ORIGINS OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

Poor, isolated, hard-working and often ill-educated, the forest settlers seemed poor material for community building. Yet their very loneliness and their desire to civilise the land in which they were to spend the rest of their lives encouraged them to set up institutions for social and spiritual refreshment, education and welfare.

The timber-cutters, coal-miners and tenant farmers who came to the North-West during the gold rush days laid some of the foundations of community organization. By 1858, when the first Waste Lands Act settlers began to arrive, there was a chain of small townships westwards from Latrobe on the Mersey to Wynyard at the foot of Table Cape, the site of each representing some compromise between the head of navigation and the lowest suitable bridging point on the river on which it was situated. In appearance they were little more than villages, each with a string of weatherboard or paling, shingle-roofed buildings fronting a muddy main street, and in function they were principally commercial and convivial; in 1859 Torquay, on the east bank of the Mersey estuary, had two inns, several 'very good' stores, butchers' and bakers' shops, post office, private houses and Anglican and Wesleyan chapels.¹ In the next half century the fortunes

¹ L.E., 12 February 1859.
of these townships varied according to the ability of their harbours to shelter ships of ever-increasing size, but between them they managed to prevent the growth of any inland centre of importance. The surveyors laid out town reserves every few miles on their advance into the forest, but these, where they attracted any settlers at all, grew only into straggling villages which might include a shop or two, a chapel, a public hall and occasionally a public house or coffee palace; even when there were settlers 30 miles inland a trip to 'town' meant a trip to the coast.

Their profitability ensured that the community would be provided with the rudiments of a trading system and with such comforts and society as a bush public house could provide. But almost any other form of entertainment, education or bodily and spiritual welfare the settlers had to create for themselves, although there was some outside help from the government and private institutions.

The importance of community support was demonstrated by the establishment of churches. The Anglicans sent ministers to both Port Sorell and Emu Bay during the gold rush period, but the reception of the Rev. Zachary Pocock at the latter place must have impressed upon them that, if they wished to gain ground from the devil and the Non-conformists, they had to stop using the forest settlements, poor and remote as they might be, as a dumping ground for unsatisfactory clergy. The eccentric and quarrelsome Pocock so alienated his parishioners that by 1859, when the parish was required to find one third of his stipend (he had previously been paid from the
Sustentation Fund) only three of upwards of 150 parishioners were willing to contribute.  

Even without the handicap of an unpopular minister the Anglicans seemed to find less support than did the Non-conformists. Port Sorell was also in danger of losing its minister (a man generally esteemed) in 1859 because of lack of funds:

...the gentlemen who have taken upon themselves the thankless office of collecting subscriptions have met with considerable difficulty.... They have experienced churlishness, niggardliness, distrust, nay, even insult in their mission, and that too from those whose children but for the presence and exertions of the Rev. E.P. Adams in the formation of Sunday Schools, reading and writing classes, would have continued...in the state in which they were a short time ago.

The Examiner's correspondent believed that the difficulty arose partly because the collectors were of the gentry, and the tenant farmers (particularly numerous around Port Sorell) felt that to give money would be an act of subservience.

Significantly the Church of England established itself most successfully in the North-West where, in organization and doctrine, it most resembled the Non-conformist churches. There were only two resident Anglican ministers in the sixties (Bishop Bromby and others were occasional visitors), but they ranged far beyond their home settlements, holding services from

1 L.E., 10 October 1857, 17 May 1859.  
2 Ibid., 30 July 1859.  
3 Ibid.
time to time in the outlying communities in schools, stores, private houses or whatever other building was available; Bishop Bromby preached in the Congregational chapel at Forth and in a produce store at the Leven. Lay readers, among them a Board of Education teacher and the Torquay stipendiary magistrate, gave some assistance, but life for the clergyman was still hard and livings were sometimes difficult to fill. The Torquay (Port Sorell) cure was vacant for ten months in 1875, for 'while the charge offers but little attraction in a social or pecuniary point its great extent and its bad roads render the duties of a clergyman exceptionally laborious'.

In the Table Cape parish, at least, the Church of England seemed to find more support among the children than their parents, for in 1867 there were only 20 communicants, but 130 children in the Sunday School. Two years later the incumbent was:

working hard to provide the outside settlements with secular and religious instruction for the

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1 Ibid., 8 June 1866, 12 November 1867, 20 August 1868 and 2 January 1869.
2 Ibid., 7 December 1865.
3 Ibid., 26 December 1865.
4 Walch, op. cit., 1866, p.182.
5 L.E., 18 December 1875.
6 Church News, June 1868, p.91.
young, by providing suitable books, and by trying to induce those who know a little to instruct those who know less. ¹

They had by then a central and three branch Sunday schools, mustering 150 scholars between them, ² and the Rev. Mr Smith was 'scarcely surpassed in Tasmania' as a hard-working clergyman. ³

The forest land Anglican laity, or at least their representatives who attended the annual meetings to choose Synod representatives, had little sympathy for Ritualism and the 'so-called High Church party'. ⁴ In 1868 a Table Cape parish meeting, having decided that the bishops were not to be relied upon, resolved that the patronage of the cure should be vested in seven Synod members chosen by the meeting ⁵ and there were similar decisions the following decade. The churches were open to itinerant evangelists, although not every Anglican found such preaching to his taste:

We had a visit from Mr Walter Douglas who has been staying some few days in the neighbourhood, and he held a service in our little chapel [at the Cam]. As some of my friends here believe in him, I am sorry to have to say I consider the affair as a most painful exhibition - the matter of his discourse being about equal to

1 L.E., 30 June 1870.
2 Ibid., 19 January 1869.
3 Ibid., 30 June 1870.
4 Ibid., 18 January 1868.
5 Ibid., 21 April 1868.
an ordinary Sunday-school lesson, and the manner extremely objectionable, the way in which certain sentences are roared out - in the most inconclusive and ineffective way, too - being most distressing, and I should think very ill calculated to attract sinners.... I always had the idea...that it was imperative to give the very best we have, or can get, in the service of God; but now it seems quite the reverse. Bad singing, bad preaching, bad grammar, bad manners, often bad morals, being the facts we meet with - attempts to improve being denounced as Popish, Puseyite, formal, and other equally intelligent names.

Douglas was later arrested for disturbing the peace at Circular Head, after stones had been thrown through the windows of the hall in which he preached, but the Cam district remained aggressively anti-ritualistic.

The Congregationalists and Methodists had the greatest success in the North-West during the sixties and seventies, partly because of their zeal and the simplicity of their doctrine and partly because of the great personal respect in which so many of their ministers and preachers were held. The Congregational church was established in the district almost single-handed by the Rev. Walter Mathison, who was sent out from England by the Colonial Missionary Society in 1857 to take over a near-defunct mission at the Don river. He arrived to find 'no church...only a few persons with whom to work, and all that represented Congregationalism on the coast was an old chapel that had been built years

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1 Ibid., 14 February 1871.
2 Ibid., 11 April 1871.
before', there was not even a house for his family. Undeterred, he held prayer meetings in private houses and canvassed the district for money to build churches. A second chapel was opened at Don at the end of 1862 at a cost of nearly £200, although the 'laborers in the field' were still few. Thereafter:

On every night of the week except Saturdays, services were held either in one of the chapels, or at the cottage of some distant farmer, where little knots of worshippers would assemble who could not conveniently reach the more central places of worship. From these far-off but pleasant gatherings Mr Mathison would return to his home on foot, often through rain and storms, over imperfectly defined paths, with tangled scrub impeding his progress....

At night his way home from the Don led through the farms of several settlers, with ten or a dozen heavy, rudely constructed slip-panels crossing the path....These places were an indescribable maze of bog in the winter....

Most of the funds needed for chapel building were raised by private subscription, the farmers' small contribution of money, material and labour being supplemented by gifts from wealthier benefactors such as Henry Hopkins, a Hobart merchant, who gave £150 for a

1 Ibid., 23 March 1872.
2 J. Fenton, op. cit., p.132.
3 L.E., 1 January 1863.
4 Ibid., 8 January 1863.
5 Ibid., 4 December 1862.
chapel at Formby. The annual anniversary tea meetings were also a reliable source of income, besides being some of the major social events of the year, for 'no other opportunity occurs for such social gatherings and re-unions'. If the day were fine 400 or more people would converge on Don or Forth from miles around to play or watch cricket or other games, consume a monster spread and then join in a prayer meeting which was usually addressed by every available Protestant minister in the district. The entry charge was 2s. or rather less for adults, children half price, and a good meeting might bring in £20 or £30, or as much as £80 if there was a bazaar as well. Inevitably some were attracted by pleasures worldly rather than spiritual. After a gathering at Don in 1871 'the landlord of the Don Bridge hotel was fluently expatiating on the benefits of tea-meetings, and exultantly pointing to several dozens of empty bottles...'; the more tolerant accepted, however, that among 370 people who had had a long journey on a hot day 'numbers would be present who had no real sympathy with the religious part of the meeting'.

1 Ibid., p.135.
2 L.E., 15 December 1870.
3 Ibid., 15 January 1876.
4 Ibid., 9 December 1865, 14 January 1871.
5 Ibid., 7 December 1869.
6 Ibid., 19 January 1871.
7 Ibid., 28 January 1871.
By 1865 the Rev. Mathison had achieved such success that at Forth:

Religion is the predominating theme with many here. Five numerously attended special prayer meetings were held in the Independent Chapel last week, when there were several applications to join the Church. The revival is...for the most part but a fuller manifestation of religious principles which have long been at work, and which have been strengthened under the ministration of the Rev. Walter Mathison. The Sabbath School, too, has done its part well through a number of years, teaching many to read, instilling the principles of religion, and unconsciously making some mediums between their parents and the church. I believe I know of an instance where a father was converted by hearing his child repeat from time to time some beautiful hymns which her Sabbath School teacher had set her to learn.1

At Don also:

We are in the midst of a glorious revival; services are held every night, and numbers are either anxious about their souls or have found peace in believing. I should say there are at least fifty....Where the work will end the Lord only knows: a blessed influence appears to be operating throughout the district. And the way Mr M. conducts the services is as truly pleasing as it is surprising. There is no noise and excitement, but everyone seems to be penetrated by a deep, earnest, and devotional spirit.2

In spite of the poverty of so many of the farmers over £400 was raised for the rebuilding of the Don chapel in 18643 and by 1872, when failing health forced Mathison

1 Ibid., 14 December 1865.
2 Ibid., 18 November 1865.
3 Ibid., 17 February 1866.
to move to a less exacting pastorate, the four Congregational churches in the parish had 130 members and 240 Sunday scholars. Four or five prayer meetings were held each week and there were from eight to ten lay preachers engaged in the work, all very devoted, and some of whom could preach very creditable sermons. By their help they were able to have two services at each station on the Sunday.

As Mathison told his church union in 1872:

It had been said that Congregationalism was only suited to the towns, but he had found by experience that it was beautifully adapted to the wants of even a scattered population.

The progress of Methodism differed little from that of Congregationalism, although the bi-ennial movement of ministers from station to station prevented any of them from winning quite the same personal esteem as Mathison enjoyed. Wesleyan meetings were begun at the new Mersey coal mines in 1853 by a miner who had been a local preacher in England and a Wesleyan minister was sent to the district four years later. The cause was assisted by lay preachers and by informal meetings for prayer at private houses; at the Cam in 1868 there was 'quite a stir in religious matters' thanks to the

1 J. Fenton, op. cit., p.135.
2 L.E., 23 March 1872.
3 Ibid.
efforts of the settlement's newly-arrived blacksmith. 1 As with other denominations the establishment of a Sunday school often led to adult meetings, the erection of a chapel and eventually to regular services, although it was not always easy to launch a successful mission; one preaching station in the Mersey circuit had a congregation of only three and: 'Out of that congregation one was brought by the preacher, and another had to be awakened when the preaching was over in order to start the tune'. 2

But by the mid sixties:

the people were beginning to arouse themselves all over the [Mersey] circuit. Even at Northdown, where the people were said to be miserably poor, they had within the last nine weeks built a comfortable chapel at their own expense. 3

By 1869 the minister in charge of the circuit was publicly calculating the satisfactorily large share the Wesleyans had of the district's souls:

There are 240 families in my circuit claiming and receiving such pastoral oversight as is possible to be given to a people scattered over 12 parishes.. .I do not say that all those 1270 persons [allowing five per family plus 70 single men] would enter themselves in the census returns as Wesleyans. They are returned by me as statedly availing themselves of the ministry of the Wesleyan Church. This return does not include occasional worshippers from other congregations in the district.

1 L.E., 20 June 1868.
2 Ibid., 13 January 1866.
3 Ibid.
...if all other denominations... have only fifteen Sabbath congregations while the Wesleyans have sixteen, with a full average attendance as compared with others, it arises in some measure from the adaptability of our system to a scattered population.

These figures were challenged by a correspondent of the Examiner signing himself 'Libertas', who maintained that as there were only 2,500 people in the Port Sorell police district (which covered approximately the same ground as the Mersey circuit) and of these 1,000 never attended any church, 400 were Roman Catholics, 400 Congregationalists and nearly 400 Anglicans, there were only 500 left for the Wesleyans; as a parting shot he remarked that a church collection of only £2.7s. for the circuit said little for the Wesleyans' zeal and devotion in the ministration of the gospel. Whatever the truth of the matter the Wesleyans continued their 'aggressive system', opening more new chapels as settlement advanced into the forest than any other denomination.

The Primitive Methodists in the North-West opened their first chapel in 1863 at Norfolk Creek, near Forth, a stronghold of those staunch Non-conformists, the East Anglian settlers brought out by the Colonial Missionary Society. There was at first no minister of the sect nearer than Longford, 70 miles to the east, but the laity

1 Ibid., 12 August 1869.
2 Ibid., 29 July 1869.
3 J. Fenton, op. cit., p.122.
4 L.E., 31 March 1863.
turned their attention to the Leven and Penguin districts, so neglected by other churches that 'large numbers of the inhabitants live a life of practical heathenism'. At Penguin the organisation of the erection of a house for the North-West's first resident Primitive Methodist minister was typical of the volunteer system so important in the erection of community buildings, with Martin Golden supplying 600 palings, William Ling studs, rafters and battens, Hales a bullock dray, Thomas Yaxley £2 instead of labour, William Groom a week's labour, and so on. In 1870, however, the Primitive Methodist minister then at Penguin, the Rev. J.H. Palfreyman, quarrelled with the church authorities and was expelled, but so many of his flock felt that he had been unfairly persecuted that he was able to form and minister to a new Independent Methodist sect, taking chapel and congregation with him; those who remained faithful to the Primitive Methodists had to build Palfreyman's successor a new chapel. But the two sects were fairly soon reconciled to each other, even to the extent of the ministers attending each others anniversary meetings, and by 1878 the general support for the erection of an

1 Ibid., 16 September 1865.
2 Ibid., 5 December 1867.
3 Ibid., 10 November 1870.
4 Ibid., 12 December 1871.
5 Ibid., 15 November 1873.
6 Ibid., 2 December 1876, 1 December 1877.
Independent Methodist chapel at Wynyard was regarded as proof that 'the unanimity amongst the different sects in this district is such that to assist each other on broad Christian principles is the invariable rule'. There was similar harmony also at Sheffield and Nook, both in the Kentishbury district, where Wesleyans, Congregationalists, Presbyterians and Baptists co-operated in the erection of Union chapels.

Of the other Non-conformist sects only the Plymouth Brethren, then generally known as Believers, were active in the North-West before 1880. At the beginning of 1873 they held a four day Conference of Believers at Table Cape, a gathering described as 'a new idea to the people of Australia and Tasmania', although they were held every year in London, Dublin and at Perth in Scotland. The Table Cape Conference, too, became an annual event and by 1875 'with one exception, there was not a Protestant family in the neighborhood but attended', while others came from as far afield as Circular Head and from Scottsdale in the North-East, the last-named having chartered a ketch to bring them to Table Cape. But not every one welcomed the visits of the Believers, even when they came to baptise eight people by immersion

1 Ibid., 9 January 1878.
2 Ibid., 26 December 1867, 21 November 1871; D.H., 5 February 1879.
3 Ibid., 9 January 1873.
4 Ibid., 19 and 23 January 1875.
in Stinking Creek. The local correspondent of the Examiner remarked rather testily that the 1875 conference made more noise than had been heard in the district since they were all there in 1874; he had no doubt that some of them were worthy men:

but the general opinion is that they are like a bad band of music, best when heard at a good distance, and the respectable portion of our community would be glad to learn that they had selected Mount Wellington or the Western Tiers for their next conference.

His opinion was challenged, but he remained unrepentant, observing in January 1876 that the Christmas holidays had been as merry as a marriage bell save for the Believers. Such opposition, however, had no apparent effect on the Believers and their travelling evangelist, G.B. Moysey of Hobart Town, conducted mission meetings at both Latrobe and Kentishbury in 1875-76, opening a chapel for the sect at the latter place.

The Roman Catholics in the North-West were mainly Irish people cared for by Irish priests, but, if there was occasional evidence of dislike of or contempt for the Irish, and even a mild Fenian scare after the attempt on the Duke of Edinburgh's life in 1868, the Catholic

1 Ibid., 8 January 1876.
2 Ibid., 9 January 1875.
3 Ibid., 11 January 1876.
4 Ibid., 16 October 1875, 3 and 15 April 1876.
5 Ibid., 18 June 1868.
and Protestant communities lived on the whole in reasonable harmony. They gave money for the erection of churches¹ and went to each other's tea meetings, the Forth Roman Catholic anniversary tea in 1873 being attended by 200 people of all denominations and 'As is generally the case on these occasions no sectarian feeling was allowed to interfere with the social enjoyment of the scene'.² The pioneer of the church in the North-West, Father James Noone, was as zealous and widely respected as Walter Mathison,³ although inevitably there were bigots on either side; Father Houlagen at Emu Bay was accused of pushing arrogantly into a Protestant's home because the wife was a Roman Catholic,⁴ while the low church Anglicans at the Cam were reported to 'consistently and constantly devote one great section of christians to perdition'.⁵

The clergy and their Sunday school teachers began the education of many children in the North-West, but the churches were too poor and their adherents too scattered to allow the establishment of full-time church schools. At the Don settlement, where the timber mills

¹ D.H., 16 November 1886.
² L.E., 8 February 1873.
⁴ L.E., 18 May 1871.
⁵ Ibid., 11 May 1871.
(their owners staunch supporters of any move for moral or intellectual improvement) concentrated a large number of families with regular incomes, a locally-financed day school was opened in 1864;¹ it flourished for a few years, being described as 'a triumph of the voluntary principle',² but eventually succumbed to the lure of government assistance. Elsewhere, however, estimates that pupils at 'voluntary' schools each cost the community up to four times as much as those assisted by the government³ gave the settlers little option but to turn to the Board of Education, established in 1854. The Board offered to open and staff a country school provided that there was a guaranteed regular attendance of 20, that the community paid at least one third of the cost of erecting school house and teacher's residence and that the parents paid fees as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Per week</th>
<th>Per month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Per child</td>
<td>9d. each</td>
<td>2s.6d. each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two children of the same family</td>
<td>7d. each</td>
<td>2s. each</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three or more children of the same family</td>
<td>6d. each</td>
<td>1s.8d. each</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite this assistance it was often difficult to establish a school. Away from the coastal towns there were few concentrations of settlement, the farms being

¹ Ibid., 28 June 1864.
² Ibid., 8 July 1865.
³ Ibid., 24 May 1873.
⁴ Tasmanian Church Chronicle, 4 May 1854.
scattered over the countryside, and there was much argument about the best site for a school.\(^1\) Even when a site had been chosen it was sometimes difficult to raise the necessary third of the cost of buildings,\(^2\) the Board of Education's refusal to accept payment in kind being a hindrance.\(^3\) In default of other accommodation churches were used as schools,\(^4\) but this was an encouragement to sectarian bickering,\(^5\) and the buildings were in any case of unsuitable design.\(^6\)

The provision of a house for the teacher was also sometimes evaded and in 1870 the head of the Latrobe school was reduced to living in an old store, although the townspeople were trying to raise one third (£120) of the cost of a house by bazaar, concert and private canvassing.\(^7\)

The school begun, the next problem was to keep regular attendance up to the necessary 20. The indifference of many parents, their inability or unwillingness to pay school fees, the necessity of children working on the farm during harvest,\(^8\) the

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1. L.E., 6 November 1865.
2. Ibid., 12 November 1868, 13 June 1872.
3. Ibid., 6 May 1869.
4. Ibid., 30 May 1867.
5. Ibid., 24 May 1873.
6. Ibid., 8 July 1869.
7. Ibid., 20 September, 1 November and 20 December 1870.
8. Ibid., 4 July 1874.
financial advantage of setting the older boys (and even girls) to such permanent jobs as driving horse or bullock teams, the atrocious state of the roads during the winter months and the fear of contagious diseases such as diptheria, all combined to make attendance highly erratic. The Chief Inspector of Schools reported in 1875 that:

The Sassafras School in East Devon nominally provides accommodation for 43 children, but in consequence of the exceedingly bad planning of the schoolroom it is only fit for about 30. Though the floor space is so encumbered by the necessary furniture that proper class-teaching is out of the question, there is only desk room for 38 children. On the day of my inspection there were 34 boys and 32 girls, or 66 in all, present. The number attending with more or less regularity during the previous month was 81, and on one occasion during the year there were actually 91 present. Looking to the annual results, I find the total number on the Rolls to have been 137. Of this only 8 attended over 200 days, while 83 attended less than 50 days. Only 22 attended with tolerable regularity during the year, and some of these were absent for three months at a time. The School is under the management of a qualified and zealous Teacher, who is in no way responsible for these deplorable results. This is not an isolated case, though it is the worst that has come under my observation.¹

Settlers working for the establishment of a school on the Castra road in 1873 estimated that from 50 to 60 children could attend, 'but allowing for causes that operate in the bush to keep them away from school, the average was put down at thirty'.² That they were not unduly

¹ H.A.J. Vol.28, 1875, Paper 16, p.27.
² L.E., 24 May 1873.
pessimistic was born out by a comparison of the census and public school returns of the North- and Far North-West for 1870.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children aged 5-14</th>
<th>Total School Enrollments</th>
<th>Average Daily Attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,340</td>
<td>1,319</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the schoolmaster such poor support was not only disheartening but also financially embarrassing. The Board at first paid yearly salaries of £150 to first, £120 to second and from £50 to £100 to third class teachers, but by the mid 1870s some were getting as little as £40, which the Chairman considered insufficient for them to live on. The salaries were originally fixed on the assumption that they would be supplemented by school fees, but, in the North-West at least, payment of fees was even more erratic than attendance. The first teacher of the Ulverstone school, opened in 1870, announced that he 'was willing to receive produce or labor from those who might find it inconvenient to pay the fees in cash', but in fact he got very little of anything:

2 Tasmanian Church Chronicle, 4 May 1854.
3 L.E., 9 February 1875.
4 Ibid., 4 August 1870.
Not half the children come that might attend, which may be attributed to carlessness on the part of the parents, but principally, I think, to a disinclination to paying the fees. Excepting in a few cases, the master has great difficulty in getting his money, and in some instances never receives anything.

The Ulverstone master and his wife (an assistant teacher) had Board salaries of only £50 and £20 respectively and were thus compelled to invoke the regulation permitting a teacher to receive, but not demand, higher fees from wealthier parents; this seemed to be an accepted practice in Tasmania, but it nevertheless aroused the ire of one of the Ulverstone merchants, who complained to the local Branch Board of Education.

The meagre financial rewards of teaching in the North-West were both cause and effect of the perennial shortage of satisfactory teachers. There were occasionally really good ones, such as Thomas Hainsworth, a Yorkshire miner and enthusiastic amateur geologist, who turned to school-teaching at Latrobe and Table Cape after the failure of the Mersey coal mines and remained a staunch supporter of any move for moral or intellectual improvement in the North-West for the next 40 years. There were also some intolerably bad teachers; the school at Ballahoo, on the Mersey estuary, had to close down in 1861 after two successive teachers had turned out to be

1 Ibid., 18 January 1873.
2 Ibid., 17 February 1872.
3 Ibid., 21 January 1860, 25 May 1861.
drunkards, while the Ulverstone head master had to resign in 1876 following various charges of improper conduct. But much more serious was the fact that so many of the teachers, however worthy they may have been, had themselves had a very limited education. The Chief Inspector reported in 1874 that:

Of 127 Teachers in the employment of the Board 8 are regularly trained and competent Teachers from the mother country. Besides these are 17 who have obtained certificates of competency under the new regulations....The majority of this small body of certificated Teachers have given me perfect satisfaction.

A further 13 who had served their time as pupil teachers brought the total of the officially qualified to 38. Then:

Of the remaining 89 head Teachers, 24 are well qualified for their position either by education or experience...though the standard of proficiency and general management in their Schools is by no means satisfactory in all cases. Of the remaining 65, none could be placed in a higher rank than the upper division of the Probationary Class, and a large proportion are so far disqualified either by age, want of aptitude for the profession, or some other cause, as to make it improbable that they will in the ordinary course of events rise to a satisfactory standard of efficiency.3

Not, indeed, that the Board's 'satisfactory' standard was unreasonably exacting. Candidates for Teachers'
Certificates of classes two and three were asked such questions as:

Describe the course of the following rivers, naming the principal towns on their banks:—Amazon, Ganges, Mississipi, Nile, Volga.

Give a short account of the Star Chamber, the Court of High Commission, the Act of Uniformity, the Test Act, the Corporation Act, the Five Mile Act, what affair occasioned the Mutiny Bill?

Candidates for class four (Uncertificated Teachers) had simpler papers:

What length of paper 2 feet wide will be required for a room 14 feet square and 10 feet 4 in. high?

Describe carefully the boundaries of Europe, and the situation of each of the principal islands in the Mediterranean Sea.¹

Schoolmasters were at first allowed to teach whatever they wished, or were capable of, but in 1865 the Board introduced a specific school programme, on the basis of which the children were examined annually by an inspector. As this syllabus is a summary of the whole formal education of several generations of the community with which this thesis is concerned, it seems worthy of quotation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class one</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Narrative in monosyllables.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>Form small and capital letters from dictation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Arithmetic</td>
<td>Form or name at sight numbers up to 20. Add or subtract up to ten.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Class two

Reading  Narrative next in order after monosyllables.

Writing  Copy a line of print.

Arithmetic  Sum in simple addition or subtraction; multiplication tables.

Class three

Reading  Short paragraph from elementary reader.

Writing  Sentence from same slowly read and then dictated in single words.

Arithmetic  Any sum as far as short division.

In addition  Read with fluency and intelligence, name the noun, adjective and verb in a sentence and show some acquaintance with maps of Australia and the world; girls must sew neatly.

Class four

Reading  Short paragraph from a more advanced book.

Writing  Sentence from the same book, but not the same paragraph, to be dictated a few words at a time.

Arithmetic  A sum in compound rules (money).

In addition  Know all the common arithmetical tables, parse an ordinary sentence and be familiar with maps of Australia and the world.

Class five

Reading  A few lines of poetry or prose.

Writing  Sentence from the same book, but not the same paragraph.

Arithmetic  A sum in compound rules (common weights and measures).

In addition  A greater proficiency in reading, writing, grammar and geography, and a thorough grounding in arithmetic as far as reductions.

Class six

Reading  A short ordinary paragraph in a newspaper or other modern narrative.
Writing A sentence from the same, but not the same paragraph.

Arithmetic A sum in practice or bills of parcels.

In addition A greater proficiency in the same fields as class five, the analysis of an ordinary sentence and the understanding of proportion and the theory of fractions.¹

This was a modest enough syllabus even if covered in full, but there seems little doubt that in the sixties and seventies many children failed to complete even a major part of it. Foremost among the teacher's difficulties was the scholars' irregular attendance, but he was hampered also by crowded classrooms, the need to administer simultaneously to children in as many as six grades and by a lack of teaching materials. The chief inspector of schools in the North and North-West pointed out in 1871 that

The stock on hand of school-books and necessaries is miserably scanty at many of the Schools, the Teachers being too poor to lay in a supply. I wish that arrangements could be made by the Board to establish depôts in each district, after the manner adopted by the Religious Tract and other Societies, for the supply of School materials at reduced rates to Public Schools. At present, in nearly every township I see books and copy-books of a very inferior description which parents purchase from the storekeepers or from hawkers at much higher rates than the Board would charge, and they are apt to take offence if the Teacher interdicts their use. Every child ought to

have at least its own reading-book; the exception is, I fear, the rule.¹

In the North-West complaints about the lack of teaching materials, particularly maps, persisted until after 1900. Finally, the quality of education was impaired by the deficiencies of the teachers themselves, not only in information, but also in the means used to impart it:

Teachers sometimes endeavour to excuse the absence of intelligent answering upon subjects of the daily lessons by attributing it to the presence of a comparative stranger [the inspector], or to the children's constitutional diffidence: the true cause being in almost every instance, a radical defect in the method of training. The art of oral instruction is not easily acquired and is possessed naturally by very few persons, but it is absolutely indispensable as an acquirement of the teacher if the school-work is ever to rise above a dull mechanical routine.²

Two examples from the school inspector's 1868 report confirmed that the Board was not achieving all it had set out to do. At Table Cape 40 of the 41 scholars enrolled were in attendance, but only 25 were presented for examination, with the following results:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Present</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Reading)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Writing)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Arithmetic)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

² Ibid., p.17.
At Northdown all 27 scholars attended and 18 were examined:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presented</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passed (Reading)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Writing)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Arithmetic)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many people in the North-West, perhaps a large majority, seemed content with what education they had picked up at the public schools. Their knowledge of the three Rs was sufficient to deal with the storekeepers and the Lands Department and they saw little point in sacrificing time from either work or pleasure to further intellectual improvement. As late as 1906 one farmer told a canvasser that he had never taken a newspaper in his life and didn't intend to start then; he found out crop prices, the only news that seemed to interest him, by asking his neighbours. But there was a small minority who believed that the adult members of the community ought to be better informed and who were prepared to devote to this end years of thankless struggling, against ignorance, indifference, poverty, bad weather and worse roads.

The first venture in intellectual improvement was

2 N.W.P., 1 March 1906.
too ambitious. A meeting at the Mersey Inn, Torquay, in June 1859 formed the Devon Institute:

> for the better development of the natural and artificial products of the country, and for the dissemination of general information on all topics of interest. The rules are so framed that any respectable settler, tradesman, or laborer may become a member if he chooses, as the entrance fee is only 5s.¹

The committee was headed by the local Police Magistrate and included several of the older-established 'gentlemen' farmers of the district. But difficulties soon arose:

> The three-monthly meetings, and mid-day meetings, are not adapted to the wants of a community consisting chiefly of tradesmen and mechanics. They were adopted...to meet the wishes of those who live at a distance; but now, that those will not, or cannot attend, it would be well if the powers of the society were more concentrated, and the Institute was made a 'Mersey' Institute, rather than a 'Devon' Institute, and similar institutes were established in other localities.²

The problem was successfully overcome for a time by monthly evening meetings. The local Anglican minister spoke on Japan and the Japanese,³ the Police Magistrate on farming,⁴ the post-master on coins,⁵ the police clerk on the Tasmanian aborigines,⁶ Thomas Hainsworth on

¹ L.E., 14 June 1859.
² Ibid., 20 September 1859.
³ Ibid., 15 March 1860.
⁴ Ibid., 18 October 1859.
⁵ Ibid., 10 November 1860.
⁶ Ibid., 15 November 1859.
self-made men and William Moore on phrenology; visitors, too, were eagerly recruited, Archdeacon Davis speaking on flowers and their associations and Archdeacon Reibey on imagination. Gradually, however, the Institute declined, probably as much because of the exhaustion of the supply of lecturers as because of popular indifference. The annual general meeting of May 1863 attracted only ten members and the Institute thereafter lapsed into obscurity.

Lectures continued to be given from time to time all over the North-West, usually in aid of some church or school building fund, and they were generally well attended; at Table Cape in June 1865 over 100 people braved a winter night and muddy roads to hear William Moore on phrenology. The clergy were prominent among the lectures, their subjects ranging from the life of Lincoln and John Bunyan and his times to geological records of primitive ages and a series of three on

1 Ibid., 21 January 1860.
2 Ibid., 19 May 1860.
3 Ibid., 10 September 1859.
4 Ibid., 4 April 1861.
5 Ibid., 9 May 1863.
6 Ibid., 20 June 1865.
7 Ibid., 16 September 1865.
8 Ibid., 24 May 1870.
9 Ibid., 8 November 1873.
natural philosophy. The school-masters contributed personal reminiscences of campaigns from 1809 to 1815 and an explanation of vegetable physiology, while the Torquay chemist gave a description of his craft.

Public readings were also popular and Thomas Hainsworth's annual reading of Dickens' Christmas story in the Table Cape school-room attracted 'intense' interest. Regular monthly readings were begun at Torquay in 1866 and fortnightly penny readings at Cam and Table Cape the following year, although by 1868 there was 'a feeling growing up that they are inconsistent with the progression of religion, and consequently at Emu Bay they have substituted a prayer meeting instead of a penny reading'. But sufficient people enjoyed the readings for them to become a regular event in the months between the end of the harvest and the time when it was again light enough to work in the fields in the evening. A successful programme might include:

Readings The Whiskers; Bob Sawyer's Evening Party;

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1 Ibid., 26 March and 25 May 1867.
2 Ibid., 21 March 1865.
3 Ibid., 23 October 1873.
4 Ibid., 24 September 1864.
5 Ibid., 20 April 1865.
6 Ibid., 29 June 1868.
Recitations  Sir Peter and Lady Teazle; Paddy Blake's Echo; Prince Arthur and Hubert; a scene from The Honeymoon; Patent and Dowlas.

Songs  The Song of Songs; My Old Wife; the Slave Ship; the British Lion.

Penny readings remained popular for a few years, but they had fallen from favour by the mid-seventies, although in 1875-76 a new craze, spelling bees for both adults and children, briefly held sway.²

Attempts at adult education that required anything more of the pupil than the patience to sit and listen were seldom very successful. Small lending libraries were established at Torquay, Formby, Don, Leven and Latrobe between 1860 and 1872,³ but most of them endured a poverty-stricken and uncertain existence. The Latrobe library closed through lack of subscription within a year of its formation and there followed an angry exchange of anonymous letters on its affairs in the columns of the Launceston press;⁴ by 1878 it was again offering a good supply of local and overseas newspapers, books, chess and draughts to subscribers of 10s. per year, but lack of support was again threatening it with closure.⁵

1 Ibid., 3 June 1869 (Table Cape notes).
2 Ibid., 18 and 25 September 1875, 11 January 1876.
3 Ibid., 10 November 1860, 4 May 1867, 1 December 1870, 27 June 1872.
4 Ibid., 15 July 1873.
5 D.H., 10 April 1878.
The Torquay library, apparently defunct in the later sixties, was revived in conjunction with the Devon Institute in 1872, in one of those bursts of community energy that were as characteristic of the North-West as the years of neglect which usually followed them; by 1877 however, the Institute was in debt, the meagre stock of books in poor condition and, subscriptions to the English periodicals having been discontinued, the reading room contained only the Australasian, the Cornwall Advertiser and Walch's Intelligencer, the last two being received free. The Leven schoolmaster began a Young Men's Mutual Improvement Society in 1870, doubtless hoping to supplement his meagre school fees, but after helping to launch a library the Society appears to have collapsed.

In general, people could only be relied upon to support that which offered entertainment as well as education, a principle tacitly admitted at Table Cape when it was decided to alternate the Rev. Richard Smith's poorly-attended lectures on natural philosophy with penny readings. They would come miles to sit and listen, but they would not read (especially if this involved paying a subscription in advance) and they showed little enthusiasm for anything that required them to think and speak.

1 L.E., 6 April 1872.
2 D.H., 16 January 1878.
3 L.E., 20 September 1870.
4 Ibid., 26 March and 27 August 1867.
Lectures and readings were soon supplemented by the efforts of local actors. There was a Mersey Amateur Dramatic Society in the late sixties which put on a programme of songs, conundrums and a farce called 'Lord Lovel and Lady Nancy Bell',\(^1\) while a Latrobe group performed as 'Nigger' minstrels;\(^2\) amateur dramatics at Latrobe seem, however, to have lapsed in the early seventies and an attempt to revive them in 1878 was vigorously denounced by the local Wesleyan minister as an encouragement to immorality and drunkenness.\(^3\) From 1875 onwards brass bands were in fashion, with surprisingly large sums (£70 from a single bazaar at Latrobe)\(^4\) being raised in each district to help them buy instruments. The resources of local talent were limited, the Latrobe land beginning without a single member who knew how to play,\(^5\) but somehow they all managed to make noises acceptable to the probably unexacting public. The Latrobe band was self-supporting within a year of its formation and continued to improve under the leadership of a newly-arrived German tailor,\(^6\) while the Leven band managed to recruit a master who had served in the Franco-Prussian war.\(^7\)

\(^1\) Ibid., 17 March 1868.
\(^2\) Ibid., 20 September 1870.
\(^3\) D.H., 6 July 1878.
\(^4\) L.E., 29 April 1875.
\(^5\) Ibid., 22 April 1876.
\(^6\) Ibid., 23 August 1877.
\(^7\) Ibid., 10 May 1877.
Local entertainers were soon re-inforced by visiting professionals, who gradually increased in number and competence as the district grew. Itinerant 'Professors' were among the first to try their luck, with Professor Kohler dealing in magic and Professor Hume in phrenology, both of them drawing large audiences, while Hackett Coulthurst, 'elocutionist and negro delineator' also did well. Acting companies, who required larger audiences and better transport facilities to meet their costs, were slower to come, the first on record being in 1876 when the XLCR Variety Troupe drew full houses for a display of gymnastics and comedy and of conjuring by Lulu Zeera, billed as a 'Circassian in Asiatic costume'.

Sporting entertainment was limited. Cricket was the only game played with any regularity, small clubs being formed seasonally in several districts, although there was at least one rifle club in the seventies. During the Christmas and New Year holidays there was a regatta at the Mersey and horse-racing on the beach between the Leven and the Forth, the latter supported by footraces, a pigeon shoot and, in the evening, a ball in Mr Fogg's store-room, 1s. entrance, 'Music and

1 Ibid., 10 September 1867.
2 Ibid., 23 October 1873.
3 Ibid., 9 April 1872.
4 Ibid., 29 January 1876.
5 Ibid., 10 April 1869, 8 January 1870.
6 Ibid., 19 April 1872.
boards provided, refreshments at the expense of the consumer'. The races were rough and ready, but the publicans' booths did good business and the Ballymacargy tenants from the Forth ('about as rough a specimen of humanity as Tasmania can produce') could usually be relied upon to enliven the proceedings; each year the Examiner's correspondent recorded 'some slight display of "Ballymecargyism", which every one on the coast knows to be synonymous with pugilism', or that nothing occurred beyond what was expected, or, in quiet years, that there were no noteworthy hostile encounters. A regatta on the Mersey in 1857 produced 28 police court cases, but in later years they were more orderly.

Court proceedings suggested, indeed, that many people found legitimate means of entertainment unsatisfying. If perjury be excepted, serious crimes were not common, although there were occasional cases of murder (both of adults and illegitimate infants) and of unnatural offences. Rape was rather more common, although

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1 Ibid., 3 January 1865.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., 6 January 1863.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid., 2 January 1866.
6 Ibid., 9 January 1864.
7 Ibid., 13 October 1857.
quite often the girl seems to have been more or less a consenting party and the case would probably never have been brought if her mother had not found her out. From time to time there were affiliation cases, productive of much interest and scandal, in which one of the young women of easy virtue which each district seemed to contain tried to establish the paternity of her illegitimate child; if beaten on one claim the lady would sometimes search for another father, causing much uneasiness among the young men of the neighbourhood.

By far the most common crimes were those of drunkenness and of the petty violence which it occasioned. In the last quarter of 1878 the Latrobe police court heard 49 cases, the charges being:

Drunk, disturbing the peace etc.       38
Assault                               5
Idle and disorderly                   1
Loitering with intent                 1
Sex offence                           1
Selling a pig's carcase without licence 1
Leaving hired service before end of engagement 1

Occasionally there were serious disturbances at public houses, like the one at Forth in 1867 when:

tomahawks, handsaws and sticks were the order of the day, and there were black eyes and broken

D.H., reports in issues between 2 October and 28 December 1878.
heads in profusion. The constable happened to be out of the way and they fought on until they were tired. 1

The police more or less kept control, but sometimes the jungle seemed to be only just below the surface; at Don the house of a man acquitted of concealing the birth of a child was set on fire 2 and at Table Cape there was talk of intimidation of the police. 3 Unruly youths were a perennial source of irritation to the respectable members of the community, throwing rotten eggs into the Leven school-room, 4 damaging buildings, 5 desecrating graves 6 and attacking the Latrobe school-master's sons. 7 Justice was hampered not only by the many other tasks required of the police besides maintaining law and order (the Chief District Constable for Port Sorell was also Tide Waiter of Customs, Inspector of Stock, Examiner of Weights and Measures and Bailiff of the Court of Requests), 8 but by the distance of the outlying settlements from police offices. People would let a

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1 L.E., 15 June 1867.
2 Ibid., 13 June 1868.
3 Ibid., 1 January 1876.
4 Ibid., 23 October 1873.
5 D.H., 13 November 1878.
6 L.E., 11 September 1877.
7 Ibid., 22 September 1877.
crime go unpunished rather than walk 15 miles to report it, so that 'we hear of innumerable cases, some of them of a very serious nature, being allowed to fall through'.\(^1\) Even when they were on the scene the police might get little help from the rest of the community; at the Leven a dozen people watched while a policeman was beaten by two drunken men he was trying to arrest.\(^2\) Sometimes, too, the police seemed to ignore crimes that were popularly condoned, for a fight between two men at Forth was common knowledge the day before it took place, yet the constable did nothing to interfere with the combatants or the 50 men and women who watched them.\(^3\)

Dislike of the police was not confined to those who sympathised with the criminal. Although the Torquay correspondent of the *Examiner* remarked in 1859 that 'A different race of police magistrates, chief district constables, and petty constables from the "ragtag and bobtail" officials of the days of convictism are springing up',\(^4\) there were still survivals of the old order. At Sassafras in 1870 two constables were accused of getting drunk on the produce of a still they were supposed to be raiding,\(^5\) while at Cam the appointment of a constable was objected to on the grounds that there was

\(^1\) L.E., 8 March 1870.
\(^2\) D.H., 17 August 1878.
\(^3\) Ibid., 26 October 1878.
\(^4\) L.E., 18 August 1859.
\(^5\) Ibid., 1 October 1870.
no crime in the township and he would only stir up trouble to justify his existence. ¹

But if the police were unpopular, the magistrates were not. Isolation, the prevalence of unwritten agreements and unreceipted sales, and often sheer boredom were fertile sources of quarrels and the courts were frequently confronted with cases which, for complexity and mendacity, would have earned the respect of Somerville and Ross; the usual solution was to bind one or both parties to keep the peace, but sometimes there would be different manifestations of the same feud again and again.

Whatever the deficiencies of the police force, the pioneer settler had more to fear from illness than criminals. The climate was a healthy one, but there were occasional outbreaks of diphtheria, smallpox, scarlet fever and 'low' or 'colonial' fever, while at the Leven dirt and an exclusive diet of oatmeal were blamed for a skin disease from which many people were suffering in 1865. ² Falling trees, carriage accidents, temperamental horses and the ubiquitous and near-deadly tiger snake also took their toll. Doctors were few and competent ones fewer, for there was little to attract a good man to such poor and remote settlements. The only doctor in the Emu Bay and Table Cape districts in the early seventies was at various times accused of drunkenness, incompetence, neglect and assault, and was on one occasion

¹ Ibid., 10 August 1871.
² Ibid., 31 August 1865.
horsewhipped. His fees were exorbitant, £17 for three visits to a local patient, and he understandably found difficulty in collecting debts; on at least one occasion he refused to attend a badly-injured man until his fee had been paid. In 1875 a committee raised a guarantee of £350 to attract a second doctor to whom 'Emolument was of no consideration when life or limb was in danger'.

If no doctor could be found recourse was had to one of the few people in each district who had the reputation of being 'skilful persons' among them a chemist, farmers and a Primitive Methodist minister 'whose skill in disease is considered by many to be superior to that of our present bush doctor'. Their remedies were sometimes simple. A woman bitten by a snake at the Leven had the wound cut, bled and given to applications of Shire and Underwood's antidote; she was then forced to drink two bottles of brandy and a wine glass of ammonia, and after a 14-hour struggle began to recover.

1 Ibid., 23 May 1872.
2 Ibid., 10 August 1871.
3 Ibid., 18 October 1870.
4 Ibid., 17 June 1875, 13 March 1877.
5 Ibid., 17 June 1865.
6 Ibid., 22 February 1876.
7 N.W.P., 21 June 1892, (obituary of E.B.E. Walker).
8 L.E., 6 May 1877.
9 Ibid., 3 December 1867.
Amateur assistance had its dangers, however, for the physician risked not only making the patient worse, but also a heavy fine for illegally practising medicine. The Torquay doctor rather vindictively prosecuted a farmer for setting a broken arm, but as the latter claimed that he accepted gifts, but did not actually charge for his services, the court heeded popular feeling on the case and dismissed it; others were not as fortunate.

The illness or injury of a breadwinner threatened a family with ruin. The doctors themselves sometimes ran insurance schemes, but many were unable to pay £30 for a year's guarantee of free attendance and medicines. The Don timber mill workers started a Workingmen's Benefit Society in 1863, members paying 1s. a month and receiving £1 per week if incapacitated, and the Rechabites began recruiting members in 1869, offering £1 per week during sickness, free doctor's attendance, and medicines and £40 on death, all for the price of 1 1/8 pots of beer weekly. In the last resort there was the almost unfailing generosity of the community. At Penguin in 1867:

A respectable farmer, with a wife and young family, was unable to 'chip in' his grain owing to severe illness, and nine of his neighbors

1  Ibid., 15 February 1870.
2  Ibid., 9 January 1875.
3  Ibid., 24 June 1875.
4  Ibid., 12 July 1864, 1 July 1865.
5  Ibid., 17 November 1870, 13 November 1877.
went to his assistance, each working one, two, or three days, as his circumstances admitted, without making any charge for the labor thus performed.

Cash appeals were not uncommon and usually well supported, the causes including not only families which had lost their breadwinner, but also a man whose horse had died, a family whose house had been demolished (despite warnings) by a falling tree and two men who had lost a schooner; the last-named received £60, which was considered an 'astonishing' figure for so scattered a district.

The commonest illness in the North-West was almost certainly alcoholism and from time to time there were attempts to stamp it out. The Mersey Total Abstinence Society was formed in February 1859 and for a year or two prospered, notwithstanding a far from temperate debate on the question of total sobriety in children, but, as so often, the departure from the district of two of the leading members caused a 'falling off...from a want of earnest advocacy' and nothing was heard of it after 1862. There were no further temperance movements

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1 Ibid., 13 August 1867.
2 Ibid., 30 April 1868.
3 Ibid., 17 April 1869.
4 Ibid., 24 May 1870.
5 Ibid., 5 September 1867.
6 Ibid., 5 January 1860.
7 Ibid., 2 January 1862.
for about eight years, although police court cases suggested that there was no lack of drunkards. In 1870 a visitor to the North-West, after noting the moral excellence of that Congregational stronghold, the Don River settlement, continued:

Away from the Don, in communities as highly favoured by nature, composed of persons as capable, as intelligent, as susceptible to improvement, the influence of intemperance, in a greater or lesser degree, is everywhere apparent. Not but that there are hundreds of sober, industrious, and consequently prosperous, families scattered along the coast..., but the effects of intemperance and its attendant, idleness, are sufficiently great to tinge deeply the entire social organisation. The besotted village drunkard, the drink-widowed woman, and orphaned children, the bushman engaged in the periodical cheque-demolishing spree, the incipient felon in the chrysalis—larrkin stage of existence, houses fast going to rack and ruin—all these are so apparent, so meet the eye on every hand, that one is forced to look for the cause....the prosperous public-house.1

The Primitive Methodists at Penguin started a Band of Hope in July 1870,2 while the Don community began a Temperance Society in March 1871 and a Band of Hope in April 1873.3 The monthly meetings usually drew good crowds, for it was entertaining as well as instructive to hear how your neighbour had been led to total abstinence. At the second meeting of the Kentishbury Band of Hope in July 1879 'The performance of two or three gentlemen brought down the house, and there is

1 Ibid., 27 June 1871.
2 Ibid., 21 July 1870.
3 Ibid., 11 March 1871, 24 April 1873.
going to be a rush next time to see the fun'.

Songs and recitations like 'What Little Girls can do', 'Come home, Father', 'The Drunkard's Catechism' and 'A Snake in the Grass' were also popular. The most serious part of the evening were the addresses on the evils of drink delivered by the leaders of the movement. Different speakers had different approaches. The Rev. Palfreyman (Primitive Methodist) told the Penguin Band of Hope that children should not mind the sneers of those who thought differently from them:

The parents were kindly entreated not to encourage in any way the use of strong drink, having an instance shown them of a man who took to this horrible practice, and who was found killed on a railway line; five of his children saw his mangled body, and went into convulsions for 48 hours, and then they were taken to an asylum, where they died; the wife being left a widow and childless.

The Rev. J.H. Brown gave 'semi-scientific' lectures on human anatomy, dwelling on the ruinous effect of alcohol on the stomach and on 'Temperance Phrenologically Considered', which dealt with the effect of drink on the brain.

In 1873 a deputation of Good Templars from Launceston helped to establish lodges in the North-West, of which

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1 D.H., 12 July 1879.
2 L.E., 11 August and 15 December 1870.
3 Ibid., 21 July 1870.
4 Ibid., 14 October 1873.
5 Ibid., 13 March 1875.
Come and Help at Latrobe, Star of Hope at Don, Amity at Forth, Harmony at Leven and Pioneer at Penguin were the first,\(^1\) followed in 1875 by Gleam of Hope at Emu Bay and Willing to Rescue at Kentishbury.\(^2\) The Good Templars absorbed many of the leaders, both clerical and lay, of the older societies, but, if they were in some ways more aggressive in the cause (as in getting up rival attractions to the more alcoholic race meetings), they also seemed to be more concerned with the welfare of their own members than with saving drunkards. The Latrobe lodge had 105 members by mid 1876.

but it would be less to the discredit of some of these if their conduct out of the Lodge room was improved, or more to the credit of the Lodge their names were dropped from the roll of membership.\(^3\)

At Ulverstone the lodge was Harmony in name more than fact, for one member was suspended for insulting conduct and several others had resigned.\(^4\)

The temperance movement doubtless did some good, but it seems nevertheless to have spent too much time keeping up the morale of teetotallers. Many people took the pledge, but this can scarcely be taken as an index of success unless we also know how many of these were conformed abstainers before they signed and how many blue ribbon children succumbed to temptation in

\(^1\) Ibid., 27 and 29 November 1873.
\(^2\) Ibid., 27 May 1875.
\(^3\) Ibid., 31 August 1876.
\(^4\) Ibid., 23 December 1876.
later life. Perhaps the most practical contribution to the cause was the establishment of a Penny Savings Bank at Latrobe in 1876. It was an immediate success:

I hear that already two depositors, who had been out in the country reaping, and were about to melt down their cheques in the usual manner - i.e., in swipes - tendered their cheques as deposits;¹

Within two months of opening the bank was thriving, 'many whose pockets could never retain a sixpence' having growing accounts.²

¹ Ibid., 18 March 1876.
² Ibid., 20 May 1876.
CHAPTER 8

RURAL TOWNS AND RURAL SOCIETY IN THE LATE VICTORIAN AGE

The North-West in 1890 was in many ways a vindication of the hopes of those who had championed legislation to settle an 'industrious yeomanry' a generation before. On the older farms the trees and stumps had gone, leaving a pleasant countryside of green crops, chocolate-brown soils and neat farmhouses, often surrounded by English trees and hedges. The coastal shipping-places were no longer untidy villages, but prosperous towns with buildings of ever-increasing size and elegance, with Latrobe laying claim to being Tasmania's largest town.¹ Each summer the trains from Launceston and the new fast steamers from Melbourne brought an increasing number of holiday-makers to lie on the beaches, swim, or take advantage of the now well-maintained roads into the interior to visit such beautiful places as the Forth Falls, the Wilmot river and Mt Roland.

But for the aging pioneers success had come almost too late to enjoy. The luckiest took a trip to England to see what remained of their families after 30 or 40 years, but most of them retired quietly to be cared for by the son who had inherited the farm or by a spinster daughter in one of the towns, and each winter their

¹ Hobart and Launceston were cities.
numbers were reduced by cold and damp. The population
of the district was by 1891 predominantly Tasmanian
born:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place of birth</th>
<th>East Devon</th>
<th>West Devon</th>
<th>Wellington</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>6,879</td>
<td>4,305</td>
<td>5,631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.S.W.</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>471</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiji</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australasia (unspecified)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>1056</td>
<td>681</td>
<td>882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>282</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| British possessions     |            |            |            |
| in Europe               | 1          | 1          | -          |
| Asia                    | 27         | 46         | 26         |
| Africa                  | 7          | 1          | 11         |
| America                 | 10         | 9          | 12         |
| Other British subjects  | 16         | 20         | 16         |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place of birth</th>
<th>East Devon</th>
<th>West Devon</th>
<th>Wellington</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>22</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greece</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden and Norway</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Europeans</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
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<td>China</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Asian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States of America</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polynesia</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>9,054</strong></td>
<td><strong>5,734</strong></td>
<td><strong>7,814</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The progress of the district was particularly noticeable in the towns and it is with their growth and the special contribution which their residents made to the community that this chapter is mainly concerned. In the country much of the old order described in Chapter Seven still survived, indeed this pioneer phase of community organisation was being repeated again and again as settlement advanced into the forest.

The population of the North and Far North-West increased by 68 per cent between 1881 and 1891 and by 28 per cent between 1891 and 1901, but the towns managed to maintain and even increase their share of the total, having approximately 25 per cent of the districts people in 1881, 35 per cent in 1891 and 30 per cent in 1901. There were, however, substantial differences in their rates of growth:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Town</th>
<th>Population 1881</th>
<th>Population 1891</th>
<th>% increase 1881-91</th>
<th>Population 1901</th>
<th>% increase 1891-1901</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Devonport</td>
<td>532</td>
<td>1,805</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>2,774</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burnie</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>981</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>1,548</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latrobe</td>
<td>711</td>
<td>1,560</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>1,360</td>
<td>-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulverstone</td>
<td>n.e.</td>
<td>1,129</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>1,164</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penguin</td>
<td>n.e.</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wynyard</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>621</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>526</td>
<td>-15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanley</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>484</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheffield</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>429</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>446</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forth</td>
<td>n.e.</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>208</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leith</td>
<td>n.e.</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alveston</td>
<td>n.e.</td>
<td>n.e.</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n.e.: not enumerated

1 Census of 5 April 1891, op. cit., p.xxiii.
In the eighties, therefore, the larger towns grew rapidly, the only exception being Stanley, in the hinterland of which settlement was proceeding only slowly. The progress of Latrobe was typical. There was a significant increase in new building, which began in the late seventies and continued through the next decade, so that by August 1885, when every available house in the town was occupied and many more enquired for, the Devon Herald reported:

Since 1877 no less than 177 buildings have been erected, including halls of public entertainment, churches, hotels, stores, business establishments, residences, and in fact we may truthfully say that within the period named all the principal edifices in the town have been built.1

In July 1885 Latrobe business men formed a Chamber of Commerce 'to watch over and protect the general interests of commerce'2 and two years later they successfully launched the Latrobe Gas Company3 and the Latrobe Building Society.4 In 1889 a traveller from Victoria was much impressed by the great length and many fine buildings of the town's main street.

The court house, post and telegraph office, are large and commodious premises, nearly opposite the railway station, and conveniently situated almost in the centre of the town. There is a free public reading room and circulating library,

1 D.H., 4 August 1885.
2 Ibid., 20 July 1886.
3 Ibid., 19 August 1887.
4 Ibid., 28 June 1887.
Oddfellows' Hall and Victoria Hall, both available for public entertainments. There are three banks, half-a-dozen commodious and well-kept hotels, two coffee palaces, livery stables and every convenience for the entertainment of tourists, and a number of very extensive produce stores. The Vulcan foundry and carriage works, established in 1871, are now very complete...and really first-class work is turned out, especially in agricultural implements and vehicles and in carriages, etc. There is a brass foundry, boot factory, flour-mill, steam carpentering, brick and pipe works, besides several other rising industries. There are a number of churches and some very handsome residences in a portion of the town styled Newton....About a mile to the eastward another suburb is rising to importance, known as Earl Town.1

In each town the traders who had survived the lean years of the sixties and seventies were giving up their old weatherboard and shingle shops for imposing new buildings of brick and corrugated iron, while from Europe, the Mainland and other parts of Tasmania there was an influx of newcomers, some to establish branches of existing firms, others to begin on their own. Chester Eastall, who set up his own general store at Ulverstone in 1889, had been educated at the Grammar School at his native Mendlesham, in Suffolk, learnt his trade at an Ipswich merchant house, worked for 18 years in London and then in 1884 came out to Launceston to help in the establishment of a branch of a London firm.2 Burnie's first newspaper, the Wellington Times, was launched in

---
1 Reprint of articles written in 1889 for the Melbourne Age by 'Moosafir', State Library of Tasmania, T.C. P 919.463, p.29.
1890 by Robert Harris and his son Charles, who had between them written for, worked on or owned some 15 newspapers in Tasmania, Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and New Zealand in the preceding 20 years.¹ William Wells was educated at Ackworth School, apprenticed to the clothing trade at Carlisle and then managed his father's business at Kettering, Northants, for 12 years. In 1884 he came to Hobart, where he worked for two years and was then engaged by the River Don Trading Co. to manage their Don general store, which in 1889 he purchased and in 1893 moved from the decaying Don settlement to Latrobe.² Even the old itinerant hawkers like 'Clocky' the watchsmith³ and the professedly French but suspiciously Irish seller of Indian shawls and silks⁴ were challenged by such sophisticated newcomers as Mr Alexander, the Lightening American Auctioneer, whose varied wares and amusing business patter drew large crowds to his pavilion at Latrobe in 1887.⁵

The 1891 census of the East Devon electoral district, of which Latrobe was the chief town, showed the variety of trades and professions which were by then carried on in an essentially agricultural district:

¹ Ibid., pp.296-7.
² Ibid., pp.242-3.
³ L.E., 18 May 1871.
⁴ Ibid., 23 October 1877.
⁵ D.H., 4 and 15 February 1887.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Colonial government officer</td>
<td>6 Other church officers 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local &quot;</td>
<td>2 Doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barrister</td>
<td>1 Dentist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solicitor</td>
<td>6 Pharmacist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law clerk</td>
<td>2 Hospital attendant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police and penal</td>
<td>13 Veterinary surgeon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy</td>
<td>14 Editor, reporter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irregular clergy</td>
<td>4 Civil engineer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanical engineer</td>
<td>20 Artist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveyor</td>
<td>3 Photographer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Architect</td>
<td>2 Musician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draftsman</td>
<td>1 Music teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher, tutor</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domestic</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hotel keeper</td>
<td>1 General servant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coachman</td>
<td>19 Attendant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>1 Hairdresser</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commercial (Finance)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bank manager &quot; officer</td>
<td>7 Insurance agent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share broker</td>
<td>1 Land proprietor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money broker</td>
<td>7 House &quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Commercial (Trade)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bookseller</td>
<td>6 Livestock dealer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fancy goods dealer</td>
<td>1 Firewood &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sewing machine &quot;</td>
<td>1 Iron and hardware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oil and colorman</td>
<td>1 dealer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draper</td>
<td>19 General merchant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothes dealer &quot;</td>
<td>1 &quot; shopkeeper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milkseller</td>
<td>1 &quot; dealer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butcher</td>
<td>25 Hawker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn, flour merchant</td>
<td>4 Broker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greengrocer</td>
<td>4 Commission agent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wine, spirit seller</td>
<td>1 Clerk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grocer</td>
<td>8 Commercial traveller</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Commercial (Transport)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Railway staff</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coach, dray and stable staff</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shipowners and crew</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bargemen, stevedores</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Industrial

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Publishing, printing</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basket making</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watchmaking</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carriage, wheelwright</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saddle, harness maker</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shipwright</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture maker</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing maker</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boot, shoe</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flour-mill worker</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bakery</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mineral water/cordial maker</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fellmonger</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fence and hurdle maker</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooper</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sawmill owner, worker</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gas manufacturer</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lime burner</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brick, tile maker</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pottery</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tin, zinc worker</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filter, boiler maker</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron-founder, moulder</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blacksmith</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Builder, foreman, clerk</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mason</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bricklayer</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carpenter</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plasterer</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Painter</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plumber</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Road contractor</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ditto foreman, clerk</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ditto labourer</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dredge</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drainer, pavior</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanic [n.o.d.]</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engine driver, stoker</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[n.o.d.]</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carter, horse driver</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourer [n.o.d.]</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Agriculture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bailiff, overseer</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm labourer</td>
<td>753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit-grower</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hop-grower</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horticulturist</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grazier</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dairy farmer</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fisherman</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water conservation</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining, quarrying</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Dependants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boy at school</td>
<td>688</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependant father</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot; son</td>
<td>1189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other dependants</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospital patient</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pauper</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indefinite Pensioner</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n.o.d.: not otherwise defined</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Professional**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Irregular clergy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher, tutor</td>
<td>48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Domestic**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hotel keeper</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating-house keeper</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boarding-house</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housekeeper</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cook</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Commercial**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Money-lender</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land proprietor</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draper</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoe-dealer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confectioner</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Industrial**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Furniture maker</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Agricultural**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmer</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit-grower</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grazier</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Dependant**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wife, mother, widow</td>
<td>1,298</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child (non-paid home duties)</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>1,485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitors</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child at school</td>
<td>688</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The depression helped to alter the pattern of town growth. In the eighties the two deep-water ports, Devonport and Burnie, had gained population more quickly than any other centre except Wynyard, but the influx of new settlers and the easy credit available to businessmen had had obvious effects on all the coastal towns. Once the boom broke, however, traders in the smaller, shallow-harbour towns seemed to feel the pinch more (if the prevalence of bankruptcies and mysterious fires in well-insured buildings suggest that) than did those in the two ports served by the big steamers, especially (as in the case of Latrobe) where there was a railway line through the town to the steamer port. It is probable that the smaller towns would have stagnated more than they actually did but for the limitation of the ridge-orientated road system, which compelled, for example, a farmer living behind Penguin to travel through that town while carting his produce to Burnie; it was thus likely that he would buy something, or at least stop at a public house, in Penguin on the way home.

The slower rate of town growth in the 1890s provided an opportunity for the construction of public utilities to catch up with that of shops and houses. In 1891 the Government Engineering Inspector had delivered a scathing

---

report on health hazards at Burnie, dealing in particular with the appalling condition of the local slaughter-houses, but finding fault also with the town's drainage:

there are several cases like one in Ladbroke-street, where there is a house built on what was naturally a little marshy level on the hill side which receives the surface drainage from the higher lands. By the formation of Ladbroke and the cross street this drainage is virtually dammed up, so that there is no get-away for it, nor for the house slops, consequently in wet weather the house is standing in a bog...and in hot weather the inhabitants of this and the neighbouring houses have to suffer the stench arising from the drying up of this bog....

In the case of the first above-mentioned house in Ladbroke-street, matters were aggravated by the fact that the privy was situated in the lowest part of the yard, and that its cesspit was merely a hole dug in the ground; when I saw it this cesspit was overflowing.¹

At Forth the inspector found that:

Many of the residents derive their water supply, especially in summer, from the Hamilton Hill Rivulet, which receives drainage from farm-yards and piggeries, and on the immediate banks of which some privies are placed.²

The new Town Boards began the task of providing water and sewers for the larger centres during the nineties, but there were complaints of noisome smells and muddy streets until well into the new century. The local Wesleyan minister complained in 1900 that 75 per cent of the people of Latrobe made no provision for the disposal of filth from their domestic premises, leaving

² Ibid., p.6.
garbage festering in heaps and stagnant drains, while the Devonport Bubonic Plague Prevention Committee placed a $10^{3/4}$d. bounty on rats the same year, which brought in 2,986 corpses in 16 months. At East Devonport in 1903 some householders left evil-smelling slops and soapsuds lying in the streets, while others failed to dispose of their night soil satisfactorily.

The remedy of abuses was hindered by the apathy of so many of the townspeople. The Boards were, as mentioned in Chapter Six, remarkable more for squabbling than efficiency; the local branch of the Tasmanian Women's Political Association wrote to the Devonport Town Board in 1905:

> The sympathy of the association is keenly aroused by the avowal of the helpless incapacity of the board to find some means of disposing of the rubbish of the town.

Improvement and tourist associations were formed from time to time, but their lives were always short and even the chambers of commerce found meagre support among the business community.

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1. N.W.P., 22 April 1900.
2. Ibid., 7 June 1900, 5 October 1901.
3. Ibid., 17 January 1903.
4. Ibid., 26 February 1905.
As the towns grew so did they offer an increasing range of services which, although available to the whole district, were organised and supported mostly by town people. This was particularly evident in education. In the Education Department schools the 1865 system of six years primary education remained in force, apparently unchanged in any essential. From the late seventies onwards attempts were made to deal with the more flagrant cases of truancy within the two-mile compulsory radius, but extracts from the government school returns for 1891 suggested that the attendance of many children was still far from regular:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total enrolment during year</th>
<th>Average on roll</th>
<th>Average daily attendance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Town Schools</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Devonport</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burnie</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Country Schools</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Kentish</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Ground</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindred</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regular attendance was probably discouraged by the persistence of the fee-paying system. By 1904 only the Tasmanian and New South Wales Education Departments still charged fees, and whereas in the latter state the fee was only 3d. per child per week, in Tasmania it was much higher and in addition penalised those who were unable to pay in advance:

Weekly | Quarterly (in advance)
---|---
One child | 9d. per child | 6s. per family
Two children of same family | 7d. " | 10s. " "
Three " | 6d. " | 12s. " "
Four " | 4d. " | 14s. " "
Five " | 4d. " | 17s. " "

It is probable that the standard of teacher had gradually improved, although the case of the master at Melrose Creek in 1894 who was instructing his class in Latin, French, algebra and physics was considered 'quite out of the usual order'. At least between 1885 and 1888 teachers in the Latrobe district had their own association, said to be the only one of its kind in Tasmania, which met first monthly and later quarterly to discuss such subjects as artificial aids to memory, the teaching of grammar and the payment of school fees. Representative of the men in charge of the largest schools in the North-West was William Nassau Holmes, head of West Devonport in 1900, who had been educated in Dublin at the Rathmines School, Walkers Military Academy and then briefly at the Dublin University before coming to Tasmania with his father, a retired captain of the King's Royal Rifle Corps. After some years farming he joined the Education Department in 1885, teaching first at Osterley, a village in the

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2 N.W.P., 8 May 1894.
Central Highlands and then at five other schools of gradually increasing size and decreasing remoteness before being appointed to West Devonport. At Burnie the head master in 1900 was Robert Crawford who had begun his own education in Board schools, gained the highest marks ever awarded in the State Schools Exhibition, completed his studies at the Launceston Church Grammar school and then gradually worked his way up through the ranks of teachers.

But even with better-qualified teachers the Education Department schools still had many failings. That the lady teacher at Sprent had twice to do battle with a tiger snake in her own class-room was perhaps not the fault of the government, but the primitive facilities and extreme overcrowding of many school buildings in the North-West certainly was. In 1904 a visitor to the Ulverstone school, which had a regular attendance of about 130, was horrified by what he saw:

This school (65 feet x 21 feet) was erected in 1882, and does not appear to have had anything done to it since...the woodwork is quite bare, all the downspouts are either gone or are defective, consequently all the water that falls from the roof lies around the building and soaks underneath....

The sanitary arrangements are in a most disgusting state. There are only two closets (one each for boys and girls); these have cesspits, and the stench arising from same is very strong, and can be smelt from the school. There is no

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2 Ibid., pp.361-2.
3 N.W.P., 9 February 1897.
urinal whatever, the small enclosure in front of boys' closet being used for such, and with from 60 to 80 boys the result can be imagined.

In the yard at rear of teachers residence is a well with pump, and has evidently been in use, I presume for domestic purposes. This is within a few yards of the cesspit, and there is also a cemetery adjoining school premises. The whole of the surrounding ground is very sandy, so I should imagine water from this well must be contaminated....

The inside of the school is very gloomy. Every window is daubed over with dark paint; so much so that on a dull day it is very difficult for children or teacher to see....

I also inspected the residence attached to the school. I find that two of the front rooms have had a partition removed so as to form a class-room.... There is only one other room fit for occupation in the front; the remainder at back are in their present condition unfit for habitation. All the drainage from the high ground at rear soaks under this part, same as the school. 1

The Chief Health Officer considered Ulverstone an exceptionally bad school, but there seems little doubt that there were others far from satisfactory. The local boards of advice frequently complained to the government about overcrowding, failure to carry out repairs and the need for more and better books, maps and furniture, 2 but very often they were ignored for, as the North-West Post remarked, 'The Education Department invariably pleads poverty even when absolutely


2 N.W.P., 30 January 1894, 7 February and 25 April 1901.
required works are brought under its notice'; thus the Department's remedy for overcrowding at West Devonport in 1893 was to tell the headmaster to reduce the number of scholars by 30. It was the town business and professional men who were most obviously dissatisfied with the state primary school system, and it was their children who were most in evidence at private institutions of more advanced education. A Post editorial of 1898 expressed their feelings:

For education up to a certain point there has been a remarkable enthusiasm, and, as a result the remotest bush township has its school and its teacher. But, in Tasmania more particularly, there has not been much faith in anything but the mere elements. As one result of this, the rank and file of the State school teachers are very poorly paid, and very hard worked. For a certain very modest sum it is possible to secure teachers who will teach something somehow....With this the average politician is content.

From the eighties onwards private schools of gradually increasing size and standard were established in the coastal towns. Among them was the Burnie High School and kindergarten opened by the Rev. Heber T. Tranmer (late of the Grammar School, Knutsford, Cheshire) in 1894 which offered, in return for fees ranging from £4.4s. per annum kindergarten to £12.12s. per annum matriculation 'to secure the Moral Culture of pupils as

1 Ibid., 3 February 1898.
2 Ibid., 21 February 1893.
3 Ibid., 3 February 1898.
well as Mental Training. The Holy Scriptures are read daily and the work includes Sacred History. The Subjects taught are the Greek, Latin and French languages; English, in all its branches; Mathematics, and Natural Science'.

At Devonport the Devon College was established in 1896 by J. Milner Macmaster, who had been educated at Bristol Grammar School and London and Glasgow universities, prepared students for entry to Oxford and Cambridge and finally written leaders for the Melbourne Telegraph and Age. The college offered Latin, algebra, Euclid, book-keeping and other 'ordinary subjects' as a basic course, with Greek, French, German, piano and organ music and singing as extras, and proved a great success. In 1899 27 of the 35 pupils over 12 years of age and who had been attending the college for more than a year gained certificates from either the University of Tasmania or Trinity College, London.

Other innovations included a Commercial College begun at Latrobe about 1884 by J.F. Corp, which was for a time attended by the children of many of the leading townspeople, although it lapsed into obscurity after 1888. In 1891-92 the government helped to establish technical schools at Latrobe, Sheffield, Ulverstone and Devonport, but these, after a promising beginning, were forced to close in 1893 when the depression-impoverished

1 W.T., 16 January 1894.
3 D.H., 19 December 1884, 11 December 1888.
Treasury withdrew its support. In 1898 G.A. Gurney extended the syllabus of his Ulverstone Grammar School to include book-keeping, geology, carpentry, forge work, freehand and mechanical drawing, painting, sketching and pruning, besides experimental farm work supported by a Board of Agriculture grant. Gurney hoped to develop the school on the lines of the County Schools in England, but local support proved insufficient and in 1900 he had to give up the whole enterprise and return to his former place in a Hobart private school.

There seemed fairly general agreement among those who cared to express an opinion that more advanced, and particularly more practical, education was desirable. The *North-West Post* remarked in 1903, that 'Business today and in the future is a matter of increasing intelligence, and will not be built up by strength of arms so much as by force of mind', going on to develop the theory that commercial and technical schools would educate the worker to the fallacies of socialism. But a clear distinction was made between those forms of advanced education which better fitted children for life on the land or in a country town and those which merely

1 N.W.P., 16 June 1891, 11 June 1892, 31 March 1898.
2 Ibid., 30 November 1899.
3 Ibid., 3 November 1898.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid., 11 December 1900.
6 Ibid., 24 February 1903.
encouraged them to drift into those parasitic sinks of iniquity, the big cities. In 1898 the Post launched a bitter attack on the prevailing notion that manual labour was degrading and that the boys must enter the counting house and the girls 'spank' the piano until a rich man married them. The result, said the editor, was that the cities were crammed with 'young ladies' and 'young gentlemen' begging for work, while in the country land cried out for settlers,¹ and he condemned suggestions that the government should provide secondary or more advanced education:

Inferentially, by this circumstance, the Government is committed to a policy of indifference concerning the duty of seeing that the lads and maidens grow up robustly imbued with a desire and suitably informed for the purpose of following industries pertaining to the land on which they were born. These qualities are the foundation of a nation. With the exception of those of a purely building or manufacturing type, city occupations are excrescences, being more ornamental than useful. Youngsters should be taught this, and also the dignity of labor.²

The University of Tasmania was also regarded by many as an impractical extravagance. This:

high class Hobart school for the education of a favored few of Hobart's sons and daughters... by highly-paid imported professors, whose emoluments are the proceeds of taxes ground out of the heavily-burdened Tasmanian taxpayer...³

¹ Ibid., 19 August 1898.
² Ibid., 23 August 1898.
³ W.T., 4 June 1895.
And in 1903 the Advocate took up the same attack:

If the State cannot afford to grant subsidies to our local bodies to save the highways of traffic from threatened ruin how can it support a tin-pot Alma Mater, a toy University?¹

The establishment of the first hospital in the North-West was also the work of town people. For years public conscience had been intermittently stirred by pitiful cases such as that of an injured man at Latrobe in 1882, who had been brought into the town to await a steamer passage to the Launceston hospital, taken round the various hotels in a cart for two or three hours, refused any accommodation and eventually given shelter by a private family.² But it was, as always, much easier to find sympathy than money or initiative and, if the Rev. Claude Roberts had not come to Latrobe in 1885, the district might have waited years longer before a hospital was built. Roberts, who had taken part in the establishment of a cottage hospital while curate of Low Harrogate, in Yorkshire,³ led a committee of business and professional men in a campaign for funds, with benefit concerts, Hospital Sunday collections in the churches, and private canvassing. In view of the good crop prices then prevailing the response to the appeal was not very generous,⁴ but the government offered an annual subsidy

¹ ADV., 16 September 1903.
² D.H., 29 March 1882.
³ Ibid., 14 July 1885.
⁴ Ibid., 20 November 1885, 8 January 1886.
of up to £250 if a like sum be raised locally\(^1\) and by 1887 the committee were able to call tenders for the building. The hospital was opened in January 1889,\(^2\) but within two years the depression had begun to stifle local contributions\(^3\) and by 1892 they had been so reduced that the government subsidy fell for the first time below the permissible maximum of £250:

**Receipts for 1892**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Government subsidy £194.13s.8d.</th>
<th>Government payment for pauper patient £20.10s.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary contributions</td>
<td>194.13s.8d.</td>
<td>Sundry receipts 13.14s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patients' payments</td>
<td>80. 4s.5d.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**£503.15s.9d.**

The principal expenses of the year were:

- Salaries and wages £137.14s.
- Repair fund £45.15s.
- Medicines 82. 8s.11d.
- Food 76. 9s. 4d.

The 'most stringent economy', aided by 'the remarkably good state of the public health, with freedom from epidemic disease, and a singular immunity from accident cases' enabled the hospital to end the year with a

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\(^1\) Ibid., 1 October 1886.


\(^3\) N.W.P., 18 September 1890.
surplus of more than £100, but the uncertainty of its income required the committee to proceed with great caution and defer such useful additions as an operating room which would have ended the upsetting practice of operating in front of the other patients.² By the turn of the century the hospital was treating between 100 and 150 patients annually, but its income was still barely adequate, local contributions being well below the desired £250³ and fees (from 3s. to 5s. per diem, according to the patient's means) difficult of collection.⁴ In 1900, however, the government voted £1150 for new buildings⁵ and, with improved methods of arranging and collecting debts⁶ and an increase, doubtless encouraged by the agricultural boom, in local support the hospital began to do better.

Besides the hospital the towns had by the nineties a reasonable supply of well-qualified doctors such as Dr Meyers, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P., L.B., who began practice at Ulverstone in 1894,⁷ while the travelling dentists also extended the range of their visits.⁸ Even so the

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² N.W.P., 3 February 1894.
⁴ N.W.P., 14 February 1901.
⁵ Ibid., 31 January 1901.
⁶ Ibid., 30 January 1902.
⁷ Ibid., 28 June 1894.
⁸ Ibid., 11 February 1893.
energy with which Dr Wilkinson advertised his Pink Pills suggested that patent medicines remained popular and the more skilful of the itinerant quacks also continued to make a living, at least until the police or disillusioned patients caught up with them; in 1896 'Professor' Paul Baron was fined £100 for selling a farmer a panacea for £5 in a Latrobe hotel.¹

Some doctors and employers of labour continued to run their own insurance schemes,² but the principal organisers of sickness and accident funds were now the various friendly societies. In East and West Devon in 1891 approximately one person in twelve belonged to a Society:

¹ Ibid., 6 August 1896.
² D.H., 2 May 1884, N.W.P., 4 January 1890.
Lodges | Financial Members | Unfinancial Members | Honorary Members | Registered Wives
---|---|---|---|---
Independent Order of Odd Fellows (Manchester Unity) | 5 | 299 | 2 | 5 | 191
Independent Order of Odd Fellows | 2 | 100 | 56 | 4 | 74
Independent Order of Rechabites (Salford Unity) | 6 | 265 | 16 | 14 | 108
United Ancient Order of Druids | 2* | 62 | 6 | 8 | 30
Protestant Alliance | 1 | 62 | 4 | 1 | 6

The membership figures refer to the Latrobe lodge only, that at the Leven having lost its books in a fire.

Local people who had fallen on evil times were still helped by private subscriptions, but the prevalence of itinerant beggars of dubious honesty encouraged the formation of benevolent societies at Latrobe and Devonport. The *Devon Herald* remarked on the establishment of the former in 1887 that 'The number of petitions that are presented to business men or persons in private life at Latrobe during one year is really astounding' and went on to point out that a society would be better able

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1 The population of East and West Devon at the census of 5 April 1891 was 14,788. The table was compiled from the returns for 31 December 1891 in Statistics of Tasmania, H.A.J., Vol.26, 1892, Paper 124, pp.412-3., the location of the lodges being confirmed from Walch, op. cit., 1893, pp.239-41.
to distinguish between those who genuinely needed assistance and those who would merely abuse it.¹ The revival of the Devonport Benevolent Society (which had apparently been in existence during the depression) in 1898 was for similar reasons commended by the North-West Post.

Notwithstanding its comparative prosperity, this town, as well as others on the Coast, has to pay the penalty arising from a considerable floating population, which penalty is having the care of those who do not float, but become stranded.²

The society collected subscriptions from business firms and private citizens and issued purchase orders and blankets to the needy; even at the height of the agricultural boom in the 1902-03 financial year some 250 orders were made, although over half of them were for a few people perennially destitute.³

Most innovations in medicine and welfare were welcomed by the community even if, as in the case of the Devon Hospital, it gave them little active support. But attempts to enforce vaccination, in theory compulsory since 1857, were met with strong opposition on both moral and medical grounds. The prosecution of objectors⁴ was followed in 1884 by the establishment of a Leven branch of the Launceston Anti-Compulsory Vaccination Society, which had a membership of over 60 and was organised by Thomas Oswin Button, a brother of

¹ D.H., 25 November 1887.
² N.W.P., 13 August 1898.
³ Ibid., 27 August 1903.
⁴ D.H., 19 December 1884.
the free-thinker W.B. Button. The society argued that vaccination was dangerous, that its worth had not been proven and that sanitary reform was the only way to stamp out smallpox, but some other opponents of compulsion expressed their feelings with much greater bitterness. A correspondent of the Devon Herald signing himself Free Lance referred to 'this reign of medical tyranny, begotten of ignorance and superstition' and lamented that 'upon the blood of our children live the "medical profession" and their jackals, the public vaccinators, who prowl round the country catching and wounding their victims.' Branches of the society were set up at Latrobe and Sheffield in 1887, with local M.P.s, clergy, business men and even doctors among their supporters, and it was decided to endorse abolitionist candidates for parliament and to establish a defence fund for members prosecuted. There is no record of the societies in the North-West taking any further action, but in 1889 parliament agreed to the suspension of compulsory vaccination.

In the larger towns the old entertainment fare of locally-organised concerts and readings, with occasional

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1 Ibid., 3 February 1885.
2 Ibid., 22 October 1886.
3 Ibid., 21 and 28 January, and 8 February 1887.
visits from second-rate professionals, had been superseded by the nineties by much more varied and competent performances. The increasing size, prosperity and accessibility of the district encouraged quite famous companies to visit it and they usually did well. Amy Sherwin, probably the most popular Tasmanian singer of the day, played to packed halls in 1887, taking £239 against expenses of only £89,\(^1\) and when she came back in 1898 her Devonport concert had to be held, for want of a hall large enough, in a produce store.\(^2\) Among the other notable visitors of the period were the Ethel Grey Dramatic Company, who presented a four-night season of 'Lost in London', 'The youth who never saw a woman', 'East Lynne' and 'Our Boys',\(^3\) R.F. Young, comique of the Hobart Orpheus Club, whose star turn, straight from London's Tivoli was 'Ta-ra-ra-boom-deay',\(^4\) the Kate Howard Company with a four-act spectacular drama 'Sins of a city'\(^5\) and the Henry Dramatic Company with 'Charley's Aunt'.\(^6\)

The more persuasive of the phrenologists were also well received. At Devonport in March 1893 Madam Aramanda, palmist and phrenologist, was 'fairly besieged with

\(^1\) D.H., 2 and 5 August 1887.
\(^2\) N.W.P., 1 February 1898.
\(^3\) D.H., 21 February 1888.
\(^4\) N.W.P., 30 May 1893.
\(^5\) Ibid., 11 October 1900.
\(^6\) Ibid., 20 November 1900.
visitors, young and old, male and female, anxious to have their past laid before them as an open book'. The Post reported one lady to have been considerably agitated by the amount her palms revealed of some past financial transactions, but two months later 'Professor' Mason's character delineations of volunteers from the audience packed the Giblin Hall at Devonport. Mason and Madame Aramanda apart, however, itinerant lecturers seldom did very well. More typical was the reception of 'Professor' Klang in 1888, at whose performance, so the Devon Herald reported, 'intellectual Latrobe was represented by about 15 persons. This is, we think about the average attendance at any lecture'. In 1895 Douglas MacTavish found it quite impossible to attract an audience at 1s. per head to hear him speak on 'China, Japan & Corea' and abandoned his tour of the district.

More frequent visits from professionals seemed to encourage rather than deter local amateurs. In most towns there was at least one drama group, although it was not uncommon for them to drift into obscurity and later reappear in some other form. At Latrobe there were the Britannia Minstrel Troupe, which lasted for only a few months in 1886 and the Latrobe Garrick Club, which in 1886 and 1887 put on 'Our Girls', 'An old

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1 Ibid., 7 March 1893.
2 Ibid., 4 and 9 May 1893.
3 D.H., 23 October 1888.
4 N.W.P., 14 and 19 March 1895.
5 D.H., 11 June and 13 August 1886.
master' (comedietta), 'The Turkish Bath' (farce) and 'Naval Engagements' (comedy). In 1891 the Ulverstone Amateurs took over £25 at their Burnie performance of 'The Pirates of Penzance' and in 1895 the Devonport Dramatic Club put on 'The Coming Woman' and 'A Rough Diamond'. Latrobe, Devonport, Ulverstone, Burnie and Wynward all had brass bands during the nineties and the Ulverstone players won the country championship at Launceston in 1895, but even in an age fascinated by all things military they sometimes found it difficult to keep going. The Burnie band was crippled by internal jealousies in 1894, the Latrobe Federal Band went through a 'prolonged period of semi-comatose existence' which ended with a revival later in 1899 and the Devonport band was in 1902 in a state of near collapse, being without either funds or master. Among other amateur musicians were the Ulverstone orchestra, formed in 1895 of five violins and a 'cello, the Devonport Philharmonic Society, which collapsed after its conductor

1 Ibid., 10 September and 9 October 1886, 11 March 1887.
2 W.T., 22 July 1891.
3 N.W.P., 29 June 1895.
4 Ibid., 23 July 1895.
5 W.T., 5 January 1894.
6 N.W.P., 23 November 1899.
7 Ibid., 2 and 23 August 1902.
8 Ibid., 9 April 1895.
had left the district but was later revived, and the Latrobe Orchestral Society, whose opening concert in November 1899 included songs, dancing and the music of violin, piano, cornet and double-bass. Dances too improved. No longer did the more sophisticated pleasure-seeker have to risk the uncertain floor and beery company of a produce-store 'ball', but could revel with dignity at something like the 'poster, plain and fancy dress ball' held by the Oddfellows at the Burnie Town Hall in 1903, of which the Advocate reported:

The floor was occupied by between 60 and 70 couples, many being attired in artistic and fanciful costumes. Capital music was supplied by Mrs. Abbot (piano), Mr. Ford (violin) and Mr. Connolly (cornet)...

In the country the old order still survived, with local amateur temperance and charity concerts. In many places there were still monthly Band of Hope meetings, like that at Wesley Vale in March 1893, when 80 people paid 1d. to hear recitations, dialogues and selections from Hoyle's 'Temperance melodies'. From the late eighties the Women's Christian Temperance Union was also active, particularly in attempts to keep young people out of mischief in their spare time. In 1892 Union members at Penguin began to organise Saturday evening

1 Ibid., 19 December 1896.
2 Ibid., 30 November 1899.
3 ADV., 13 August 1903.
4 Ibid., 11 March 1893.
entertainments supplying coffee and pies, books, magazines, draughts, chess, ludo and dominoes. ¹ In 1895 a similar venture was begun at Forth ² but, as at Penguin, there was trouble with the rowdy element and after a free fight entrance was restricted to those who paid a subscription of 2s. per quarter. ³ Another example of country entertainment was the Wilmot combined annual sports and Methodist tea in December 1903, which began with woodchopping matches, then went on to foot races, walking matches, a bun struggle for the boys and, in the evening, a concert in the local hall. ⁴ An amateur concert in aid of the Penguin Presbyterian church produced favourites new and old like 'John Peel', 'Jock o'Hazeldean', 'In the Gloaming', 'Scotland Yet', 'Kitty Lynch', 'The Sea is England's' and 'Boys, keep away from the Girls'. ⁵

Libraries and societies for cultural improvement had proliferated by the nineties, but there were still complaints that they were poorly supported. In 1891 there were public libraries at Latrobe, East and West Devonport, Forth, Ulverstone and Burnie, ⁶ the annual subscription (usually 10s.) giving access not only to the books, but also to newspapers, journals and games.

¹ Ibid., 9 July 1892.
² Ibid., 31 January 1895.
³ Ibid., 22 August and 3 October 1895.
⁴ Ibid., 12 December 1903.
⁵ W.T., 8 October 1890.
Receipts of the West Devonport library in 1893 were:

Subscriptions £33.2s.6d. Proceeds of entertainment £16.19s.9d.

Government grant £33.7s. From V.D.L. Bank £6

The depression and consequent suspension of the government grant dealt harshly with the smaller libraries and in 1897 that at Latrobe was 'in a state of decadence', with only ten or twelve members. By 1901 the East Devonport and Ulverstone libraries had closed, although there were new ones at Sheffield, Penguin and Wynyard.

The most popular cultural groups in the nineties were the literary and debating societies, of which the first was that at Latrobe, formed in 1884, followed by the Devonport Literary Association (about 1890), the Ulverstone Debating Society (also about 1890), the Devonport Parliamentary Debating Club (1895) and the Burnie Institute Literary and Debating Society (1898).

1 N.W.P., 13 January 1894.
2 Ibid., 11 August 1894.
3 Ibid., 11 March 1897.
4 Ibid., 11 March 1897.
5 D.H., 23 May 1884.
6 N.W.P., 27 February 1890.
7 Ibid., 25 September 1890.
8 Ibid., 1 August 1895.
9 E.B.T., 2 June 1898.
The clergy, doctors and more public-spirited business men were prominent in the support of their fortnightly or monthly debates, which were usually concerned with politics. Between 1890 and 1892 the Devonport association heard and discussed papers on woman's rights, capital punishment, one man one vote, the mining interest, whether competition was a necessary evil, land nationalisation, the Kanaka labour question and the best means of restoring the financial equilibrium of the colony.¹ The Burnie society seemed to address a more popular audience, debating smoking versus non-smoking, cycling and a tax on bachelors.² Some of the meetings were popular, attracting as many as 50 people,³ but the societies were not an outstanding success, public support being, as in so many other institutions in the North-West, very erratic. The Devonport Literary Association held regular meetings between 1890 and early 1894,⁴ then collapsed, was revived in July 1895 with a well-attended debate on the question of the United Kingdom becoming a republic,⁵ collapsed again in 1897, was revived briefly in June 1899⁶ and thereafter disappeared for ever. The same

¹ N.W.P., 9 September 1890, 16 July and 29 August 1891, 28 April, 5 May, 2 and 30 June and 5 August 1892.
² E.B.T., 2 and 21 June 1898.
³ Ibid., 21 June 1898.
⁴ N.W.P., 13 September 1894.
⁵ Ibid., 18 July 1895.
⁶ Ibid., 20 June 1899.
town's Parliamentary Debating Club made an unsuccessful beginning as an offshoot of the Literary Association in 1893, was abandoned by its members for 'athletic pastimes' the following summer, held some debates in the winters of 1896 and 1897 and then collapsed until a revival in 1903. Mutual Improvement Societies were formed at Ulverstone (about 1890), Wynyard (by 1892), Forth (1894) and Kentishbury (1901) offering lectures and discussions on topics as varied as the fisheries of Scotland, smoking, the justification of war between Christian nations and the desirability of free and compulsory education, but, like the debating societies, their existence was usually ephemeral.

1 Ibid., 14 April 1894.
2 Ibid., 1 and 15 August 1895.
3 Ibid., 9 November 1895.
4 Ibid., 11 June 1896.
5 Ibid., 8 July 1897.
6 Ibid., 28 March 1903.
7 Ibid., 25 September 1890.
8 W.T., 3 January 1893.
9 N.W.P., 23 June 1894.
10 Ibid., 18 May 1901.
11 W.T., 9 May 1893.
12 N.W.P., 4 August 1894.
13 Ibid., 4 May 1895.
14 Ibid., 27 July 1895.
Sporting entertainment had also become more varied. Cricket was still played by the devoted few, but it had been over-shadowed as a crowd-attractor by football, which was introduced to the district in the early eighties.\(^1\) Inter-club rivalry was keen and foul blows and fouler language more the rule than the exception among both players and spectators;\(^2\) so fanatical did some people become about the game that a Barrington labourer complained that a number of farmers would employ only footballers.\(^3\) In 1905 some 400 of the 1500 spectators at the North-West Football Association's premiership match were so enraged at the impending defeat of the team on which they had placed their money that they invaded the ground, battled with the players and forced the umpire to abandon the game, thereby ensuring that all bets would be cancelled.\(^4\) A new sport in the nineties, but one second only to football in popularity with the crowd, was chopping. The United Australasian Axemen's Association, formed at Latrobe about 1891, was by 1893 able to offer prize money totalling £558, plus liberal travel allowances for visitors, at its annual contest,\(^5\) although it was rent by internal conflict in 1896 and split into two separate associations, one

\(^1\) D.H., 18 August 1881.

\(^2\) Ibid., 12 August 1884, 22 June 1886; N.W.P., 25 July 1896.

\(^3\) N.W.P., 20 August 1896.

\(^4\) Ibid., 11 September 1905.

\(^5\) Ibid., 30 January 1894.
based at Latrobe and the other at Ulverstone. Most towns had a racing club which managed to stage at least one meeting a year. Cycling was something of a craze in the nineties, while athletics, rowing, tennis and golf each had their little band of enthusiasts.

There were some who felt that the comforts of the nineties had not been gained without sacrifice. The pioneers were being replaced by a new generation, more prosperous and perhaps less willing to lend a hand for a neighbour or a community project than those who had held the land before them. One old Pine Road settler told a political meeting at Penguin in 1891 that there was new blood in the district and it did not seem to 'congeal' with the old; 15 years before, if he had fallen in with a newcomer en route to a meeting he would have let him jump up on his horse behind him and, by the time they had got through the mud, blood would have 'congealed', but now they had good roads without unity. Another sign of the times was the proposal to establish a gentlemen's club at Devonport because the population of the district was now so great that even the most hospitable man could no longer keep open house.

The supposed degeneration of modern youth was a

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1 Ibid., 17 November 1896.
2 Ibid., 31 March 1896.
3 Ibid., 20 January 1891.
4 Ibid., 1 December 1898.
particular cause of anxiety. The Burnie correspondent of the Post, after praising the town's axemen, continued:

At the same time, it is very lamentable to notice the many evils existing among our young men. No doubt, were they to regard their lives as they should do, in the near future we should be able to sport as noble and manly a body of young men as could be desired; but as long as they persist in indulging in evils such as commencing smoking at 8 or 10 years old, drinking at 12 or 15, and far worse - immorality - such expectations will never be realised. One may ask where are the parents? It is evident parents of this generation do not take the interest in their children that parents of the past generation took....

In 1899 the Post deplored the fact that cricket was languishing at Devonport, in spite of the large increase in population.

Nor is there any lack of lads or young men. Anyone who doubts that assertion has but to visit the railway station and the post office corner between half-past 7 and half-past 8 on a Saturday evening....Nor has the sudden popularity of any rival pastime brought about the downfall of the old sports. Bicycling is where it was, or flags a little, the tennis court is less constantly occupied than of yore, and those who have developed the golf microbe may be counted on the fingers of one hand.... The literary and debating society is comatose as the cricket clubs, and the library does not boast more, or more industrious readers.

A gymnastic club had begun with a flourish the previous winter:

but as it became clear that brilliant feats with clubs or dumbbells were not to be done without

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Ibid., 14 January 1893.
steady work, many members stole back to their beloved post office steps, and the club passed quietly out of sight.\textsuperscript{1}

Serious crimes were still few, the courts devoting most of their time to drunks, disturbers of the peace and people who settled arguments about stray pigs or the right of way on a narrow road by throwing stones at each other, but larrikinism was a constant source of complaint. After the dull routine of the day's work the young men sought diversion by congregating at some convenient point in each settlement to smoke, drink and make uncomplimentary remarks about passers-by; in 1902 the streets in the centre of Devonport were said to be undesirable promenades even for men at night and quite impossible for women.\textsuperscript{2} If they tired of standing about they might brawl among themselves or with newcomers like the party of roughs who arrived from Launceston in 1899 and announced that they had come 'to go through the Devonport boys'.\textsuperscript{3} Other pastimes included stoning roofs, breaking windows, setting fire to wood heaps and pelting a Wesleyan lay preacher (who was also the local schoolmaster) with mud and road-metal.\textsuperscript{4} The Chinese market gardeners in the coastal towns were often subjected to unprovoked annoyances and sometimes actually attacked, the courts tending to look leniently on such offences; in 1903 a man who said he was in the habit of speaking

\begin{itemize}
\item[Ibid., 1 April 1899.]
\item[Ibid., 20 March 1902.]
\item[Ibid., 18 April 1899.]
\item[Ibid., 16 October 1890, 18 October 1892.]
\end{itemize}
roughly to Chinamen was fined 5s. for a completely unjustified assault. The celestials were forcibly discouraged, too, from seeking employment other than gardening. In 1893 some Chinese who attempted to work on the Heazlewood gold diggings were driven off, the local correspondent of the *Wellington Times* remarking:

Most of the boys have no objection to letting the Chinamen go in for vegetables, but they cannot brook their interference or taking up of bush work, and I think the Chinamen in question did a wise thing to clear out, as doubtless they would have been subjected to many petty annoyances.

The state of the churches also was regarded by some people as evidence that all was not well with society, especially by those who could remember, perhaps over-nostalgically, the pioneer days of simple religious ardour and at least superficial unity amongst the various Protestant sects. Now the influence of religion seemed threatened not only by indifference (the *Devon Herald* estimated in 1888 that only about 15 per cent of Latrobe people attended church regularly), but also by inter-sect rivalry and the pernicious doctrine of free thought. In 1879 the Presbyterian church turned its attention to the many Scottish people living in the North-West, sending the Rev. J. Scott of Hobart on a mission tour which the Torquay correspondent of the *Devon Herald* hoped would:

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1. Ibid., 30 July 1903.
stir the Presbyterian people on the Coast into something like life; every other Christian denomination has its church, chapel, or meeting house, with a regular supply of Ministers, but the Presbyterian body, who I believe are numerically stronger than many of the others as yet has made no sign.\textsuperscript{1}

A further six years elapsed before the Coast Presbyterians could be stirred into sufficient life to arrange for a minister to live amongst them,\textsuperscript{2} but by 1890 they had established churches at Devonport, Don, Castra and Penguin.\textsuperscript{3} Travelling missionaries of the Baptists and the Church of Christ were also active in the eighties, among the latter being C.A. Moore of the Kentucky University, who gave a series of talks in 1885 on 'The Completeness of the Gospel of Christ', 'The Bringing-in of the Gentiles' and 'The Opening of Lydia's Heart'.\textsuperscript{4} The Rev. John Bennett, Congregational minister at Latrobe, regarded the newcomers with little favour and launched a vigorous attack on 'that great delusion, baptism by immersion'\textsuperscript{5} at a series of open-air meetings held in January 1887, seeking to prove that the Congregationalists were the true Baptists and the other sects merely Katabaptists.\textsuperscript{6} The relative degrees of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1} Ibid., 29 January 1879.
\item \textsuperscript{2} Ibid., 19 May 1885.
\item \textsuperscript{3} Walch, op. cit., 1891, p.348.
\item \textsuperscript{4} D.H., 6, 10, 13 and 17 February 1885.
\item \textsuperscript{5} Ibid., 1 January 1887.
\item \textsuperscript{6} Ibid., 5 January 1887.
\end{itemize}
applause accorded Bennett and a Church of Christ missionary, G.B. Moysey, at a debate on the subject suggested, however, that the immersionists were at least as numerous as their opponents. Baptisms by immersion in the Mersey attracted as many as 400 onlookers and towards the end of the decade both the new sects began to build or purchase their own places of worship, the Baptists having by 1890 chapels at Latrobe and West Devonport and the Church of Christ at Latrobe, New Ground and Nook.

The Salvation Army was the newcomer which made the biggest impression. The first of its soldiers arrived at Latrobe late in 1883, but his 'absurd and eccentric manner' encouraged the local larrikins to cause such disorder that he was refused further use of the Wesleyan school-room. The following year the Army launched a much more extensive campaign in the larger towns and in doing so attracted much and often unfavourable public interest. The more evangelical of the existing churches had at first welcomed the Army as likely to swell the ranks of their own congregations with those who had seen the light, but they soon realised that the converts were intended, in fact, to

1 Ibid., 28 January 1887.
2 Ibid., 14 April 1885.
5 Ibid., 25 January 1884.
become soldiers, for the Army showing little approval of other sects.¹ Others complained that the night was made hideous not only by the songs and harangues of the soldiers but also by the noise of the young men (at Latrobe the larrikins formed a Skeleton Army) who jeered at them.² One irate resident of Latrobe denounced the 'Jim Crow Jumpers' for bringing religion into ridicule.

in this place their only dupes have been young girls and boys, attracted by the dancing and dance music that has been offending our ears and feelings on Sunday and week days, and by the attraction of late hours and libidinous conversation freely indulged in by the attenders at these symposiums of credulity and knavery.³

In some places interest in the Army declined once the novelty had worn off, but the soldiers continued to get good audiences at meetings in the larger towns, while hallelujah tea meetings⁴ and bun worries might attract as many as 380 people.⁵ In December 1884 the Army laid siege to the Latrobe hotels, banging the big drum, firing 'volleys' of prayers and hallelujahs at the publicans and attempting to drag drunks out of the bars. They promised to make the Club hotel a barracks and the publican a captain, but rotten eggs were thrown,

¹ Ibid., 4 March 1884.
² Ibid., 16 April 1884.
³ Ibid., 22 April 1884.
⁴ Ibid., 29 April 1884.
⁵ Ibid., 26 May 1886.
the police intervened and nine of the soldiers found themselves in court charged with disturbing the peace.\footnote{Ibid., 9 and 16 December 1884.} Gradually, however, the community came to accept the Army, of not with unqualified approval at least to the extent of admitting that, in its own peculiar way, it did good. In spite of the ubiquitous larrikins the North-West was always fertile ground for the unsophistically fervent evangelist, especially as, in the words of the Devon Herald's Leven correspondent 'In the present day...very few of the so-called ministers go out into the highways and hedges to preach'.\footnote{Ibid., 8 February 1887.} A report from Wynyard in January 1893 was typical of the Army's activities:

The Salvation Army so far fully retains its popular hold in this district. Notwithstanding that it has now lost its novelty to a very great extent, large crowds attend at the services held in the rink, especially on Sundays. There have been several additions to the 'soldiers' of late, including some of the well known lads of the district. The open air meetings on 'Market Green' usually attract a goodly number of onlookers, and the strange actions and comicalities of the performers keep the interest from flagging.\footnote{W.T., 26 January 1893.}

Besides the establishment of new sects there was also some vigorous extension work by the Church of England and the Wesleyans during the eighties and the result was such an abundance of churches that when the depression began to affect their income the maintenance
of both clergy and buildings became a considerable problem. In January 1893 the Congregational minister at West Devonport announced that lack of support compelled him to resign and return to England and later in the year the Baptists of the town also had to give up their pastor. In 1894 the Post suggested that, as an average church attendance at Latrobe of 250 (out of a population of 1600 or 1700) scarcely warranted six buildings, services should be concentrated in the Roman Catholic, Anglican and one of the Non-conformist churches. The idea was discussed by the Non-conformists, but nothing came of it, although the Congregationalists did retrench by placing all their churches between Latrobe and the Leven under one minister.

Some people blamed the spread of free thought for an apparent decline in church attendance, but, if indeed there was a decline, as opposed merely to new building outstripping the increase in the population of the district, it seems unlikely that free thought was a factor of much importance. The doctrine appeared to gain some ground in the later eighties, perhaps because of a lecture tour made by Ada Campbell in 1885. She was frequently applauded by a good audience at Latrobe,

1 N.W.P., 10 January 1893.
2 Ibid., 3 September 1903.
3 Ibid., 30 October 1894.
4 Ibid., 29 December 1894.
5 Ibid., 8 January 1895.
although there were hostile demonstrations outside the hall,\footnote{D.H., 1 and 5 May 1885.} and the following year the Leven correspondent of the \textit{Herald} noted with regret:

> the extensive circulation of so-called free-thought literature in our town and district, of the London 'Freethinker' and Melbourne 'Liberator' stamp. The latter paper, some twelve months ago, only had some six or seven subscribers here. Now I know for a fact that fifty or sixty copies are sold here every week, not to mention the endless variety of pamphlets of the same school.\footnote{Ibid., 1 May 1886.}

But, if the churches had reason to be dissatisfied with the size of their congregations (a meeting of the Mersey Wesleyan circuit was told in 1895 that on some parts of the Coast only one person in eight attended church),\footnote{N.W.P., 17 August 1895.} the rout of the free-thinker W.B. Button in the 1891 West Devon election suggested that the cause was indifference rather than rival doctrines.\footnote{See above, Chapter Five.}

Some ministers did make a determined effort to bring more people into their churches during the nineties. In July 1893 the \textit{Post} reported that:

> The revival in church matters that has taken place in the \[Anglican\] parish of Forth and Leven since the Rev. Canon Beresford has come into residence is very marked, and in no more satisfactory manner than in the large increase in the attendance at the several churches....Both at Forth and Penguin where until quite recently
the Anglican Churches had a very scanty attendance, the congregations that now assemble for divine worship fill the sacred buildings. The Rev. Wilfrid Earle, the parish curate, is winning his way amongst his flock at the Penguin, where he now resides....

At Devonport the Congregational church, which had been split (even to the extent of three men bodily ejecting the minister from his church) in a bitter dispute between congregation and Union over the choice of pastor, the Rev. A.A. Munns arrived from Victoria early in 1895 to restore order. He immediately launched a series of 'Pleasant Sunday Evening' talks, at which he emphasised that everyone was welcome regardless of his clothes or ability to contribute to the collection, the subjects including not only descriptions of the Hobart Exhibition and Victorian art gallery, but also an explanation of Christian socialism in which the 'conservative' churches were condemned for shrinking from the masses. The evenings proved very popular and in May 1895 Munns was encouraged to hold 'a religious service of a somewhat unusual character' for sportsmen, attended by many local athletes wearing their colours and in the course of which Munns praised

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1 N.W.P., 29 July 1893.
2 Ibid., 10 and 13 March 1894.
3 Ibid., 9 February 1895.
4 Ibid., 7 May 1895.
5 Ibid., 7 and 14 May 1895, 4 January 1896.
6 Ibid., 5 May 1896.
a man who could deal a blow in self-defence and ridiculed 'scented hair-parted-down-the middle fops'.

Among other ventures was the North-West Christian Endeavour Union, launched by the Baptists in August 1898 and which by April 1900 consisted of 10 societies with 171 active members, including 17 local preachers and 66 Sunday school teachers. There were also missionary tours by a Presbyterian evangelist named Toshach in 1895 and by the Roman Catholic Father McCarthy in 1898, both of which were considered very successful. The Salvation Army continued its campaign, reporting 'devil defeating times' at Latrobe in 1896, although Devonport was 'hard for souls'. But there is no evidence that such campaigns significantly increased reliable community support for the churches. Indeed by 1900 returning prosperity had encouraged a revival of inter-sect jealousies, among them a Presbyterian attempt to break away from the Congregationalists at Devonport.

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1 Ibid., 21 May 1895.
2 Ibid., 19 April 1900.
3 Ibid., 20 June and 23 July 1895.
4 Ibid., 23 March 1898.
5 Ibid., 28 July 1896.
CONCLUSION

The advocates of legislation to settle an 'industrious yeomanry' of small freehold farmers won an especially good hearing in Tasmania. The pastoralists had already occupied those parts of the island suitable for grazing without very expensive clearing and it was impossible, their estates being freehold, for the government to enforce the more intensive use of their land. Recovery from the depression which followed the mass emigration to the goldfields and the withdrawal of imperial financial support depended, in consequence, on the settlement of the forest lands of the western half of the island. Equally important to many people was the social desirability of bringing to the colony a hard-working and respectable middle class to fill the gulf between the gentry and the mass of convicts and emancipists: they wanted to replace the wilderness with an English countryside of green fields, neat farmhouses and sturdy yeomen.

But good intentions were to some extent thwarted by economic realities. Revenue was needed too urgently to allow crown land to be disposed of cheaply and only to bona fide small settlers and the Waste Lands Act of 1858 was accordingly a fairly conservative measure, its first object the sale of land to the first comer or highest bidder, regardless of what the buyer intended to do with it. Even the 'free selection' clause, which permitted any person to buy one 320 acre lot for £1 per acre, lacked any condition of residence or improvement,
leaving the way open for another onslaught on the forest lands by speculators and their dummies: nor were the price and terms of credit very generous for land that was so expensive to clear.

Despite its weaknesses, the act was at first surprisingly successful in settling bona fide farmers in the North-West, the speculators probably being deterred by the depressing effect on land values of the vast areas held under the regulations of 1851. The settlers came in about equal numbers from within Tasmania and from the United Kingdom, most of them having already some experience in agriculture gained either from labouring on or occupying a farm; the urban artisan showed little inclination to go onto the land. They quickly proved not only the excellence of the basaltic soil but also their own ability, by leaving farms seasonally to work for others, to establish themselves with a capital considerably less than the supposed minimum of £150 or £200. But within a few years the pioneers were confronted by a problem apparently unforeseen by the advocates of yeoman farming, namely the ruinous fall in crop prices which inevitably followed the vast post-gold rush increase in the acreage under cultivation in Australia. By the late 1860s their crops were almost worthless.

The settlers' lot was made even harder by the reluctance of parliament to help them build roads and railways. The pioneers believed that to pay as much as £1 per acre for their land entitled them to a substantial rebate in the form of government-constructed outlets to the coast, but the succession of ministries
which struggled with Tasmania's economic difficulties, while not denying the justice of the settlers' claims, found them very hard to satisfy. Both within and without parliament there was an almost hysterical fear that any increase in taxation would complete the supposedly imminent ruin of the colony and the wealthy majority in the Legislative Council, satisfied with the convict-built roads in their own districts, were disinclined to risk the imposition of an income tax by allowing money to be borrowed for new public works. In consequence almost every proposal for road construction in the forest lands was rejected and for twenty years the selectors were left to fend for themselves. That most of them managed to keep their farms was a tribute both to their own determination and the fertility of the soil.

During the 1880s Australian produce markets at last improved, principally because of the growth of the mainland cities, although the North-West benefitted also from the mining boom in the mountains to the south. Crop failures or such external economic factors as the commercial depression of the early 1890s still brought occasional bad seasons, but from the mid-1880s at least until 1910 arable farming was a secure and modestly profitable occupation for the prudent settler. The rise in crop prices was accompanied by a welcome change in the attitude of Tasmanian politicians to public works in the forest lands, attributable to the beneficial effect of mining on the revenue and the retirement of some of the old ultra-conservatives of the Legislative Council, and very large sums were voted for roads railways and bridges during the 1880s. Such spending was checked the
following decade by the depression, but the main roads were never again the impassable quagmires they had been twenty years earlier.

The position of the small farmer was further strengthened from the 1890s onwards by the introduction, from Europe and the mainland, of new agricultural techniques. Foremost among these was industrial dairying, which, thanks to an almost inexhaustable home and overseas market for well-made butter and cheese, gave the farmer a regular monthly income and lessened his dependence on the unpredictable grain and potato market. By 1910 the North-West was a prosperous mixed-farming community in which the small freeholder on 320 acres, or indeed as little as 100 acres, could make a comfortable living.

The two essentials in this successful establishment of an industrious yeomanry were the fertility of the soil and the existence of an accessible and profitable market; given these a man of perseverance and some knowledge of agriculture could begin a farm with very little capital. The settlers in the North-West had always the first of these, but they had to wait twenty years for the second and in that time came perilously close to failure. In this matter Tasmanian politicians deserved little credit, for they could have substantially lowered production costs by easing the terms on which land was sold and helping the settlers to build roads.

The small farmers never played a very distinguished part in Tasmanian politics. They had little respect for the ineffective, quarrelsome parliament far away in
Hobart and, but for their desire for government money, they would probably have altogether ignored it. Instead they consistently chose their members on their ability, real or pretended, to get roads and railways for the North-West, and were almost equally consistently disappointed by the results: here they were defeated not only by their own laziness and gullibility in matters political, but also by the prevailing party system in which alliances, being factional rather than regional, made district log-rolling difficult.

The electors never lost their obsession with public works and the thwarting of schemes unlikely to benefit the North-West, but from the 1890s onwards they were required to pass judgement on an increasing number of issues of national rather than parochial importance. Here again they followed the principle of 'What's in it for us?', voting solidly for federation and open Australian produce markets, seeking (with indifferent success) to judge the relative financial rewards of a low or high national tariff and, after fears of land nationalisation had been allayed, coming to regard the Labor Party as the friend of the small freeholder and the champion of the development of Tasmania for the little man.

The first community institutions in the North-West were the chapel, the elementary school and the village hall: to establish these many, perhaps a majority of the settlers were prepared to work hard and they were built quite quickly. But the farmers lacked the
interest (and in many cases the means) to launch more advanced institutions such as hospitals, and technical schools and these had to wait until the people of the country towns were sufficiently numerous and affluent to build them for themselves. Nevertheless, whatever the limitations of the yeoman farmers of the North-West as institution-builders, their community was one of essentially law-abiding, kindly and industrious people, an asset to Tasmania and a vindication of the hopes of those who had championed legislation to settle the small man on the land.
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1. Private papers
2. Company records

II OFFICIAL CONTEMPORARY SOURCES
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III NEWSPAPERS

IV CONTEMPORARY BOOKS AND PAMPHLETS

V LATER WORKS
1. Books and Pamphlets
2. Articles
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4. Miscellaneous
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